United Nations A/72/PV.11

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-second session

11th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 September 2017, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vučić: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming your important duties. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his successful presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and to avail myself of this opportunity to thank and pay tribute to the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his active engagement during the first year of his tenure in such a remarkably responsible post and for initiating a reform process of great importance to the Organization.

It is my great honour to address the Assembly for the first time in this Hall in my capacity as President of the Republic of Serbia. We have carefully followed the addresses made by world leaders over the past two days, and it seems that it would be no exaggeration to say that almost everybody has spoken about the necessity of the reform of the United Nations and about peace and stability, often accusing someone else — an opposing party — of acting to prevent peace and stability or being responsible for a difficult situation in the world. I will do my best to avoid such an approach.

Last year, in this very Hall, it was said that the situation worldwide was difficult. Today it is certainly more difficult than it was a year ago. Today, I take this opportunity to speak before the Assembly, not to attack those who cannot defend themselves or those who would not be able to defend themselves from the truth. I will speak about Serbia, its people, its re-entering of the world, and the fact that the world is once again accepting and embracing Serbia and Serbia is trying to understand the world, even if sometimes it might not agree with the great Powers. Unlike some leaders, I have no need to patronize my people or to run an election or non-election campaign from this rostrum, because we have already won all our internal political battles. That is why I will speak about Serbia today and Serbia in the future, as well as the future of the entire Western Balkans region, where I come from.

It important to speak about the entire Balkans, especially its Western part, because without broader and more serious insight into the problem we are facing, we will not be able to see, let alone resolve, our individual problems. I would like to share a quote from our famous writer, Isidora Sekulić, who said the following:

> "A peninsula is a separate world. Countries and nations within it, as if embarked on one boat must have one common political problem and a

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political ideal, no matter how different they might usually be. The Balkans comes first, before all the countries in the Balkans, whenever the moment is difficult and dangerous, regardless of whether it is dangerous politically or in terms of culture. Will the Balkans for once open its sleepy eyes and see its paramount cultural capacity, if it plunges as a whole?"

Condition number one for a prosperous future for all of us in that region is how to preserve peace and tranquillity. The Republic of Serbia invests a great deal of effort in stabilizing the situation in the region, which is our permanent commitment and policy. As we have done so far, we will continue to work devotedly and committedly to promote regional stability and cooperation, because we believe that it is an investment in a better tomorrow for all of us. In order to achieve success today and progress in the future, it is necessary, no matter how pathetic that might seem, to preserve peace and stability at all costs. This is a priority sociopolitical task that requires daily hard work and learning. That in turn will help economic growth and reforms, which are a prerequisite for a better life, not only for the poor but also for the middle classes.

In previous years, we in Serbia demonstrated that with responsible politics of fiscal consolidation, even without huge privatization incomes, we could create a budget surplus. We lowered the unemployment rate from 26 per cent to 12 per cent and created a flexible labour market by introducing modern laws, even though doing that has proved difficult for some far stronger countries in the developed West. Above all else, I am proud that we have begun to invest in the creativity of our young people and that digitalization and artificial intelligence are becoming important topics in Serbia, not just in the most developed countries of the world.

Of course, there are still many things that we must deliver. When a person comes from the Western Balkans the first question is whether we will be part of some new conflict or whether we will opt for a better and more carefree future. In spite of its numerous challenges, Serbia will continue investing in efforts to create conditions for better relations within the region that are based on mutual respect and commitment to a common European future.

Today I would particularly like to mention the political issues in the region and Belgrade's relations with Pristina. Bearing in mind the paramount importance of this issue for the Republic of Serbia, I underline once again that reaching a political solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija is a national priority for Serbia. It is an issue that has a huge effect not only on our economy but also on a clear future for young people both in Serbia and in the entire region.

We all know that we do not recognize the unilateral declaration of independence of so-called Kosovo, but I will not speak about disrespect for our territorial integrity and sovereignty. Instead, I will speak about our efforts to resolve the problem and to try to find a solution to a centuries-long problem that the great Powers were not helpful with back in 1999 and 2008. I will speak about our efforts to talk about the future with Albanian leaders from Pristina.

Yesterday we all listened to Michael Bloomberg saying that it is better to spend thousands of hours talking than one minute fighting. Everything that has been achieved so far through the Brussels dialogue has been the result of difficult compromises and unambiguous concessions on both sides, albeit mostly on ours. The significant progress reached throughout this process confirms the constructiveness and commitment of the Republic of Serbia to this dialogue.

We have also demonstrated our readiness to make compromises that were not easy, thereby helping to find mutually acceptable solutions to many complex issues. I want to emphasize that in the past four years, after we started the dialogue process in Brussels, although there have been some fights, quarrels and physical attacks against the Serbs in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, nobody has been killed in ethnic confrontations. For Serbs and for Albanians, this is a great step forward, and I am therefore eager to continue with such political efforts in the future.

Nevertheless, upon entering this Hall, we received information that Pristina's authorities had announced that they had secured the majority needed for Kosovo to gain membership status in UNESCO. I urge the Assembly not to allow this, and remind members that it was these very people who took part in the devastation of Serbian monasteries, churches and cultural and spiritual heritage sites in Kosovo and Metohija.

Additionally, we have made great efforts to stabilize the overall situation in the Balkans. We have often stayed silent in the face of insults and attacks from various other countries because we know that peace and reconciliation are more important than

scoring easy political points. Precisely because of that, Serbs are more than eager to continue with successful economic reforms, as well as with the idea for creating a regional economic zone, which we do not intend to give up on.

The former Yugoslavia was widely respected as a market and for its success in attracting investors and international attention. Today, we are too small to succeed as individual markets. I therefore firmly believe that a unique customs zone and taxation system are the future of the region. An example of the problems we have is that a farmer producing milk only 10 kilometres from the border loses at least 7 to 8 per cent of his profit by waiting 48 hours to cross into another country. I also believe that a better, improved economy is the second biggest task for all our nations and for Serbia as well.

The third issue — no less important than the first and second — is uniting the big tasks of economic progress with our aspirations to European Union (EU) membership. The path to membership in the EU, our most important trade and investment partner, is seen as leading to greater stability, economic progress and the consolidation of democracy. In previous years, the EU enlargement policy for Western Balkan countries has been one of the most powerful instruments in the political and economic transformation of the countries of the region into stable and modern societies.

We believe that this policy, regardless of all the difficulties existing within the EU itself as well as in the candidate countries and potential candidates, must continue, and on an equally strong basis. We all want to be a part of the EU, but sometimes people in the Balkans and people in Serbia are treated unfairly, in contrast to those who took that route earlier. We are asking the EU not to speed up our accession process but to treat us fairly and, at least to some extent, in the same manner that it treated some of the full-fledged Member States admitted after 2003.

As all are aware, Serbs are a very dignified people, and we expect all other countries of the world to respect us as we respect them and their territorial integrity and sovereignty. We have never wanted nor will we ever want something that belongs to somebody else. We ask only for equal respect for our country and its people. I am proud that Serbia protects its freedom, independence and sovereignty and is a country that observes democratic principles. We will continue along that path and never give up the politics of military neutrality, because we believe that it is the politics of peace and the future.

While we strive towards joining the EU and establishing partnerships with Western countries, including by improving our relations with the United States, we continue to cherish the best possible relations with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. Not only are we not ashamed of those good relations, we are very proud of them. But we will always be ready to observe developments in today's world by not judging superficially what is right or wrong, just or unjust. We have never threatened anybody, nor will we, but we will always dare to condemn actions such as launching a missile that forces the inhabitants of the Japanese island of Hokkaido to spend a day or a night in shelters.

I would like to remind members that the courageous and wise American President Dwight D. Eisenhower was prudent enough to say that

> "every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed".

Likewise, we will always show care for and solidarity with Syrian, Afghan, sub-Saharan or any other refugees, without diminishing our resolve to confront international terrorism and radical Islamic movements such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham or Al-Qaida, because we believe that a democratic society based on equal rights for all is the only society that we want to live and see our future in.

We recognize that fighting poverty and social inequality in the context of preventing radicalism and strengthening extremism is a very important task. We champion the integration of citizens of all religions and political and other affiliations into modern society on a basis of common values, while preserving each person's individual identity and respect for all.

Serbia believes in and is pleased with the increasingly important role of the United Nations, not only in maintaining peace and stability, but in the more important tasks the Organization performs for the benefit of humankind today. Serbia will support any United Nations reform that strengthens the role of the Organization, because it means more discussion, less use of force and less arrogance in international relations.

Our job is therefore to do everything we can to enable a more active role for the United Nations worldwide.

I will conclude with words that are often attributed to the great Albert Einstein:

> "The world is a dangerous place to live. Not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who do not do anything about it."

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Moïse (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to convey our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over this session of the General Assembly.

Today, all eyes rightly turn to the United Nations, whose mission has never been so essential. That is why we must pursue the reform process started years ago, in order to better adapt our Organization to modern reality so that it can effectivelyattain the goals enshrined in the founding Charter of the United Nations. In that connection, I welcome the vision and leadership of Secretary-General António Guterres. I hope that under his able leadership, the Organization can honour the commitments and initiatives aimed at improving living conditions for everyone on our planet and enabling the United Nations to confront global threats and prevent and resolve conflicts.

The Republic of Haiti fully supports any initiative that reduces international tensions, defuses crises and achieves peaceful settlements to disputes. We believe that the United Nations must act in the context of conflict prevention. The Republic of Haiti has always spoken out against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and firmly condemns any tension generated by the desire to possess and produce nuclear weapons.

In the Middle East, the Syrian crisis continues to shock our universal conscience. In this very Hall, numerous resolutions have been voted on calling for an end to that inhumane tragedy, which has left countless dead. The prevailing status quo in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, punctuated by intermittent violence, will obviously not produce a solution.

The Republic of Haiti calls for an honourable exit from the present situation that can benefit our brother people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and urges all the parties involved to engage in dialogue and negotiation.

The successful negotiated outcome of the conflict in Colombia shows that it is not armed confrontation and blind violence that resolve disputes. May the victory in Colombia serve as an example to us all.

The Republic of Haiti, true to its ideals of peace, dialogue and friendliness among peoples, would very much like to see a window of opportunity offered to the Republic of China on Taiwan, so that it can participate in the major decisions that we, the Member States, have adopted to improve the human condition on planet Earth.

As I address the Assembly for the first time, I recognize our immense responsibility for addressing the environmental challenges and threats confronting the planet. The Republic of Haiti is committed to the environmental dimension of sustainable development. As an island State, Haiti is determined to strengthen its resilience in the face of the natural disasters that affect the Caribbean region every year. The Haitian people are making tremendous efforts to recover from the damage caused by Hurricanes Matthew and Irma.

Similarly, the unprecedented scale of destruction by consecutive hurricanes inflicted on our sister Caribbean countries, including Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica, as well as parts of Texas and Florida in the United States of America, shows the adverse effects of global warming on our planet. In that regard, the Republic of Haiti would like to express its solidarity with the victims in general and the people of the Caribbean in particular. We also stand with the victims

of natural disasters and the people and the Government of Mexico.

In that regard, my country attaches particular importance to the fulfilment of commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement, especially since the prospects for sustainable development are shrinking in the wake of environmental crises and climate degradation. We therefore hope that major greenhouse-gas-emitting countries will contribute the necessary resources for the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. We firmly believe that we must honour the pledge to equip the most vulnerable countries with the means to help them make the energy transition to renewable energies and bolster their resilience to the adverse effects of climate change.

In the Caribbean, and in Haiti in particular, the latest events have reminded us of the extent to which climate change affects our countries. And at the same moment, the spectacular power of Hurricane Maria threatens us again. But the fact is that what happens to us is not fated, but is rather a result of human beings' actions on their environment, which we have a shared responsibility to repair. The victim countries, including the Republic of Haiti, do not have the spare resources to respond adequately to the tragic consequences of climate change.

I call for an increase in insurance coverage for hurricanes and other natural disasters. The small Caribbean countries, with severely limited economic resources, need an insurance system that is proportionate to the threat. To that end, in January 2018, when Haiti assumes the presidency of the Caribbean Community, we intend to organize a regional conference to set up an inter-State commission to agree on an appropriate strategy. It will be a logical follow up to Haiti's call at the fifth summit of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Cancún, Mexico, in May, for the creation of a regional fund to finance programmes to mitigate the effects of natural disasters in the region. The fund would be financed based on a percentage of the gross domestic product of the affected countries and by developed countries that emit greenhouse gases. Haiti would like to take this opportunity to appeal to States Members of the United Nations that are affected by climate change to take this approach as well.

This year unquestionably marks a break with the instability that has been such an obstacle to the development of the Republic of Haiti. Since my accession to the presidency on 7 February, my Administration has worked to consolidate democracy and the rule of law by making efforts to create conditions conducive to socioeconomic development and political and social stability.

First, the Haitian Government has been uncompromising in tackling corruption — overbilling for public contracts, misuse of State property and cheques made out to fictitious employees, all facilitated by corrupt individuals who, through such despicable crimes, steal the fruits of education from the children of the Haitian people. Corruption, in all of its forms, plagues and atrophies the economy. It has deeply weakened our political foundation and destabilized the country's social fabric.

Corruption is a crime against development. The millions of dollars spent Haiti in recent decades were sometimes channeled into contracts that destabilized the national economy to our people's detriment. It is therefore high time that official development assistance and our domestic resources served the interests of the entire Haitian nation. Corruption deprives the Haitian Government of the resources it needs to provide basic services to the population. If it is not stopped but rather continues to spread, it will fuel political and social instability. It deprives the vast majority of Haitians of adequately distributed electricity, a quality education for their children, clean drinking water and social and economic opportunities. With the aim of reversing this devastating trend, the new Haitian leadership is waging a determined struggle against corruption.

As regards the public administration, the Government is working on five priorities based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We are working with Parliament to strengthen our republican institutions in order to provide citizens with better access to public services. This policy has been given tangible form through the Caravan of Change, a strategy aimed at providing electricity 24 hours a day through clean energy. We are looking to manage groundwater, irrigate agricultural land and tend to our rivers, which, if not cared for, pose an environmental threat. We are also striving to overcome our housing deficit and to provide 12,000 more classrooms throughout the country.

With regard to the rule of law, measures currently under way aim to guarantee the independence and increase the effectiveness of our judicial apparatus. We are strengthening our fight against corruption,

contraband and impunity. We are reinforcing public security by continuously improving and building the capacities of the Haitian National Police. At the same time, we are remobilizing Haiti's armed forces, which are working in accordance with a new development framework and strictly in line with the Constitution.

The international community has been supporting national and public security in Haiti for 13 years, and with every national disaster, friendly countries have had to come to the aid of the Haiti people, showing why we need a strong defence force and why Haiti, following the departure of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), will gradually establish a military force to accomplish three key mandates.

We will first create an engineering unit able to contribute to major public-works projects and intervene promptly following natural disasters. Secondly, we will launch an aviation unit for training young people in aeronautical mechanics and pilots able to fly helicopters in the wake of natural disasters; and thirdly, we will have a medical unit able to care for the victims of natural disasters and residents of the most remote areas of our country.

On the economic front, despite our lack of national resources, the Government is mobilizing all levers at its disposal to get the economy back on a path to growth. This year, through a legislative agenda based on the joint efforts of the political parties, we have enacted eight of nine laws geared to improving the business climate. Similarly, through its dynamic policies, my Administration is taking necessary if politically controversial measures to get Haiti's economy back on a path to growth and to create decent jobs, particularly for young people concerned about their futures. In that regard, our human resources management office is working in a framework of State reform, through public examinations, to recruit 12,000 young civil servants in order to give new impetus to the growth and development of public administration, and will be replacing civil servants who are on the brink of retirement.

We are determined to provide other alternatives and opportunities, particularly to the most vulnerable sectors of our society, to ensure that they are not tempted to leave the country, sometimes putting their lives in danger, in search of better living conditions. Haiti cannot continue to see its young people flee in search of opportunities, driven by the corruption and the destruction of national institutions that have significantly widened the gap between citizens and the State.

We wish to thank all friendly countries of the region who have taken in Haitian migrants and will therefore contribute actively to international efforts in 2018 to adopt a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

The Haitian Government has undertaken efforts to give its agricultural sector new momentum through the Caravan of Change. All of the country's departments will benefit from the public authorities' efforts to develop their potential for social and economic development. In one area of Artibonite, and in the South, in Grand'Anse and Les Nippes, we have already launched a strategy whereby the once moribund State will relaunch long-neglected but essential work. We intend to do our all to halt the accelerated degradation of the environment and make Haiti more resilient to climate change, improve basic essential public infrastructure, increase the provision of basic services, and stimulate the private sector and foreign direct investment.

What is really at stake here, and what is crucial, is creating an enabling environment for strong, sustained and inclusive growth that will create jobs. Our long-term goal is to make Haiti a magnet for investment. The Haitian people are acutely aware that they are primarily responsible for taking ownership of and organizing the country in a sovereign fashion. All our endeavours at the economic level are focused on making rational use of our scant resources and doing everything we can with them.

While we are deeply grateful to the United Nations for its commitment to Haiti, I would be remiss if I did not recall two lamentable situations that have arisen from its presence in our country. On the one hand, we have seen odious acts of sexual exploitation and violence committed by certain peacekeepers or other members of United Nations staff; and on the other, we have witnessed the introduction of a cholera epidemic into Haiti. The harmful consequences of these demonstrations of international solidarity imply, as the United Nations has already recognized, a moral obligation to enact measures to provide the resources necessary to eliminate cholera in Haiti.

Improving the health-care system, including by eradicating cholera, is a priority of the Haitian Government. Despite the recent progress, the number of victims stands at approximately 10,000 and, regrettably,

continues to grow. There are tens of thousands of cholera orphans. The time has therefore come for the United Nations to truly live up to its noble ideals, based fundamentally on respect for human rights, by assuming its full responsibility for remedying a situation that has done serious harm to the Haitian people. It is high time that the United Nations honoured the commitments it has made under the new approach to fighting the cholera epidemic recommended by the Secretary-General and approved by the General Assembly. We therefore align ourselves with the urgent appeal launched by Secretary-General António Guterres to establish a trust fund to fully implement the two components of this new approach.

We also welcome the decision taken by the General Assembly to reallocate $40.5 million from the MINUSTAH budget for 2015-2016 to the fight against the epidemic. We would like to see other international partners follow that example. We want to ensure that the sick receive adequate care, that the victims and their children get due compensation, and that drinking water and sanitation systems in Haiti are developed under the auspices of the National Directorate for Drinking Water and Sanitation.

The Republic of Haiti is resolutely committed to making progress and strengthening the rule of law. Of course, these objectives remain works in progress. The new leadership of Haiti will spare no effort to foster the great transformations necessary to bring the State out of its traumatic and painful lethargy. The Haitian Government is working tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of its people. These are vital prerequisites for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Political stability is the most important of all public goods, as I said in my election campaign. In that regard, I intend to continue the dialogue I began last week on building robust institutions in the political sphere, a dialogue in which almost all the political parties in Parliament and all local authorities took part. Moreover, in the coming weeks, my Administration will begin a national consultation in all sectors with a view to achieving the stability required to undertake a programme of economic and social development over the next 25 years at least.

Economic, political and social stakeholders in Haiti are aware of the overriding obligation they have to promote social peace in order to fulfil the destiny that has been reserved for our noble and great nation, a cradle of liberty, equality and fraternity, the Republic of Haiti.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Moon (*spoke in Korean; interpretation provided by the delegation*): First of all, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Korea, I would like to take this opportunity to convey my deepest sympathy to the victims of the earthquake that hit Mexico on 19 September as well as to the people and the Government of Mexico.

I would like to express my respect and gratitude to all Member States and the staff of the Secretariat for their contributions to world peace and security.

I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I expectt this session will yield many meaningful results under his excellent leadership.

I also wish Secretary-General António Guterres great success. The Republic of Korea is a strong supporter of the goals of the United Nations aimed at preventing conflicts and sustaining peace. I look forward to its rebirth as an even stronger organization for fostering peace and prosperity for all peoples during his tenure as Secretary-General.

As I prepared this address, I thought about the spirit of the United Nations and the joint mission we all share. The United Nations is perhaps one of the best institutional inventions created by human intelligence. It was born to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and has worked tirelessly to meet

the challenges confronting humankind over the past 70 years. The role and contribution to the international community of the United Nations will continue to grow over time. Today the number of transnational issues continues to increase, and no country can resolve them single-handedly. For this reason, we should truly fulfil the spirit of the United Nations in finding solutions to all the problems facing us.

To that end, I hope the world will look to the Republic of Korea, located on the southern part of the Korean peninsula at the eastern end of the Eurasian continent. I believe the candlelight rallies last winter in my country represented a historic moment that reflectedthe brilliant achievement of the spirit of the United Nations. Embodying the power of cooperation and solidarity in defiance of challenges, the rallies lit the way ahead towards a future for humankind. Some may remember the scenes of the candlelight rallies shown by the media. On streets sparkling with millions of lights, people expressed their opinions freely and joined in discussions on every street corner. There was singing, dancing and painting, the radiant faces of parents taking their children by the hand to join the rallies, and the pride of young people who picked up trash on the streets afterwards. All those scenes were very much a part of our democracy and peace.

The candlelight revolution in Korea started in a public square where a yearning for the restoration of democracy and the Constitution awakened citizens' collective intelligence. I myself participated in the rallies as an ordinary citizen. The people of the Republic of Korea achieved democracy in the most peaceful and beautiful manner. They proved the power of popular sovereignty, which is the quintessence of democracy. They also proved that the power of peace can bring greater changes to the world than violence can.

The new Administration of the Republic of Korea was made possible by that candlelight revolution. Beyond its significance in making way for democratic elections, the Administration was established through the people's participation and aspirations in the awareness that they are the rightful owners of the nation. I stand here now on behalf of that Administration. I am very thankful for, as well as proud, of the fact that the Republic of Korea, while it is a democracy that bloomed only recently, has shown the world new hope for that form of Government. Currently building on its new-found strength, the Republic of Korea intends to play an active role in addressing the issues facing the international community.

The Republic of Korea has always walked in step with the United Nations. Since our Government was established, in 1948, we have received significant assistance from the United Nations, both during the Korean War and in the process of post-war reconstruction. Although we were not able to become a Member of the United Nations until 1991, we have enhanced our role and responsibilities as a State Member faster than any other in the span of only a single generation. Since 1993, Korea continues to participate in peacekeeping operations. As Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission this year, it is focusing on resolving the root causes of conflicts.

In the past five years, the Republic of Korea has increased its financial assistance for refugees 15-fold, and last year, it joined the $20-million-plus club under the aegis of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. By expediting the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and making changes in its own energy policy, the Korean Government is also taking a lead role in supporting the climate-change responses of developing countries through the Global Green Growth Institute and the Green Climate Fund. Moreover, my Administration has reached the goal of filling 30 per cent of its Cabinet positions with female ministers, thereby spearheading efforts to realize gender equality, one of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the next few years, the Republic of Korea will significantly increase its contributions to the United Nations in every sector. It is truly meaningful that the theme of this session of the General Assembly — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is in line with the philosophy of governance of the new Administration in the Republic of Korea. "People come first" is the slogan that I have used for several years to express my political philosophy, and the people are at the centre of every policy of my new Administration. As of now, my Administration is pursuing bold measures to change the economic paradigm so as to deal with inequalities that stand in the way of growth and social cohesion. We are currently pursuing economic policies focused on income growth for individuals and households, and promoting an economy in which growth is fuelled by job creation and everyone can enjoy equal opportunities and the products of growth.

That is what we call a people-centred economy. My Administration's determined endeavours to realize inclusive growth will not be confined to our country. In accordance with that new paradigm, the Republic of Korea will offer its support for sustainable growth in developing countries.

I was born in a refugee town in the middle of the Korean War. That civil war, which evolved into an international war, devastated countless lives. More than 3 million people died, and many of the survivors were deprived of a decent living. My father was one of them. My father, who believed that he was taking temporary refuge at that time, was never able to return to his hometown before he passed away. I come from one of the separated families — victims whose human rights were violated because of the war. The war has yet to come to a complete end.

The Korean War, which began as an offshoot of the larger Cold War, continues to this day. Although the Cold War ended and it has been 64 years since the conclusion of the Korean armistice agreement, the war continues in the form of an uneasy ceasefire on the peninsula — the last remnant of the Cold War order in North-East Asia. As tensions mount in North-East Asia because of the North Korean nuclear and missile issue, the memory of war and its wounds are becoming more acute, and hearts that long for peace are filled with pain. That describes the situation concerning the Republic of Korea on the Korean peninsula in September 2017.

For me, the President of the only divided country in the world, achieving peace is a calling and a historic duty. I represent my fellow citizens, who have sent a message of peace through their candlelight revolution to the global village in which wars and conflicts know no end. At the same time, I have been entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding my people's right to peace and to undisturbed daily life as universal values. For those reasons, I hope that North Korea will be able to choose its own path leading to peace. I believe that peace, when it is chosen willingly, naturally becomes sound and sustainable. More than anything, I am grateful that my convictions are shared by the international community.

Despite the international community's concerted demands and warnings, and to our great disappointment and indignation, North Korea recently carried out its sixth nuclear test and additional missile-related provocations. In the wake of the nuclear test, the Korean Government has consequently convinced countries in and beyond the region of the need for stronger sanctions and pressure to make North Korea end them and choose the path of dialogue. I very much appreciate the Security Council's unanimous and unprecedentedly rapid adoption of resolution 2375 (2017), on North Korea sanctions, with measures tougher than in any previous resolution. That clearly reflects the fact that the international community is collectively outraged and is responding with one voice to address the North Korean nuclear issue and the problems on the Korean peninsula. Once again, as the representative of one of the parties directly involved with issues concerning the Korean peninsula, I would like to express my appreciation to the international community for its shared understanding and support for the position of the Korean Government.

Despite North Korea's flagrant violation of its obligations and commitments under the Charter of the United Nations, the Korean Government and the international community are determined to make every possible effort to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue peacefully. The relevant Security Council sanctions on North Korea, in resolutions that articulate the principles of a peaceful, diplomatic and political settlement of the North Korean nuclear issue, are also part of those efforts.

Once again, here in the General Assembly, where nations pledge to act to achieve world peace and the shared prosperity of all peoples, I will make the following points very clear to North Korea and the international community. We do not desire the collapse of North Korea. We will not seek reunification by absorption or artificial means. If North Korea makes the decision, even at this juncture, to stand on the right side of history, we are ready, alongside the international community, to assist. North Korea should acknowledge all these immutable facts as soon as possible. It must immediately cease making reckless decisions that could lead to its own isolation and downfall, and choose the path of dialogue. I urge North Korea to abandon its hostile policies against other countries and to give up its nuclear weapons programme in a verifiable and irreversible way.

The efforts of the international community should also be strengthened. It must continue to respond strongly and sternly until North Korea gives up its nuclear programme of its own accord. All nations must thoroughly implement Security Council sanctions

resolutions and seek new measures in the event of any further provocations by the North. It is also important to manage the situation calmly. All of our endeavours are aimed at preventing the outbreak of war and maintaining peace. In that respect, the situation surrounding the North Korean nuclear issue must be managed calmly so that tensions are not ratcheted up too far and accidental military clashes do not destroy the peace. We should all remind ourselves of the words of former United States President Ronald Reagan: "Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with conflict by peaceful means".

I would like to make a special request to the States Members of the United Nations and in particular to the Security Council. In order to fundamentally resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, the basic spirit of a secure community enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations should be fulfilled on the Korean peninsula and in North-East Asia. The pillars of security in North-East Asia and multilateralism should be wisely combined.

The spirit of the United Nations is realizing global peace through multilateral dialogue. The Korean peninsula is where that spirit is most desperately needed. The realization of peace is what the United Nations was created for, what it aims for and what it is in the process of achieving. We need the United Nations to play a more active role on the Korean peninsula. The most important role the United Nations is being asked to play today is to come up with fundamental measures to end the vicious cycle of increased provocations and heightened sanctions.

I have explained our new economic map for the Korean peninsula and new vision for the northern economy many times. I believe that genuine peace and prosperity in North-East Asia will begin when the foundation for a North-East Asian economic community is solidified on one side and multilateral security cooperation comes into being on the other.

When the Olympic Games were reintroduced, in 1896, they had not been held for 1,500 years. The impetus behind their revival was the thirst for peace. The history of the modern Olympics started with the overwhelming emotion of the first Olympics, held in Athens on the Balkan peninsula, once a centre of conflict. Five months from now, the XXIII Olympic Winter Games will be held in PyeongChang, in the Republic of Korea, the first of a series to be held in North-East Asia — PyeongChang in 2018, Tokyo in 2020 and Beijing in 2022. I hope that these three Olympics will offer an opportunity for promoting peace and economic cooperation in North-East Asia, where the remnants of the Cold War and hope for the future, as well as confrontations and cooperation, coexist. The Republic of Korea is ready to make every possible effort to that end.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I would ask members of the Assembly to imagine, for one moment, people who love peace and sports gathering from all around the world in PyeongChang, which is only 100 kilometres from the demilitarized zone, the symbol of division and confrontation on the Korean peninsula. Heads of State and Government from all corners of the world will exchange greetings of friendship and harmony. My heart fills with joy when I imagine North Korean athletes marching into the stadium during the opening ceremony, a South and North Korean joint cheering squad enthusiastically welcoming them alongside the brightly smiling faces of people from all over the world. It is not an impossible dream.

I will work wholeheartedly to turn that into a reality, in cooperation with the International Olympic Committee, up until the last minute, in order to welcome North Koreans to the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. I hope that PyeongChang will become another candle to be lit. Like the candles the Korean people held out in the face of the crisis of democracy, I believe that PyeongChang will become a candle that sheds light on peace when peace is threatened. I hope that all Member States and the United Nations will light their candles. I hope they will put their hearts and minds together to go hand in hand with peace.

Today, with that heartfelt pledge, I invite all Heads of State and Government from around the world to come to PyeongChang. The steps they take, together, will become a march for peace. I look forward to seeing them all in PyeongChang next year.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Korea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

President Aoun (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I wish him every success in his endeavours. I also thank His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for wisely guiding the work of the previous session, and I commend Secretary-General Guterres for his efforts in revitalizing the role of the United Nations.

Today we are in New York in September. We should think back 16 years ago and remember when terrorism struck this city, claiming the lives of thousands of victims. From this very rostrum, we renew our solidarity with the families of those victims and the families of all victims of terrorism all over the world.

That tragic event ignited an international war against terrorism. That war has spread and has lost its purpose. Its raging fire has spread to other countries, especially in the Middle East. Many countries have felt that raging fire — some directly, while others have borne the burden of the results. It has fed the most heinous forms of terrorism, terrorism that seeks to eliminate humankind, civilization and culture. It has perpetrated the most heinous crimes against our people. It has spared no civilians, no children, no women, no old people. It has spared no cultural or religious landmark. It has also mushroomed and struck five continents, its means growing bloodier by the minute. Its crimes have violated all laws, conventions and international norms. No one knows where this terrorism will reach and how and when it will end.

As the war began in Syria, the situation in Lebanon became destabilized. It was clear that, as an Arab country, it was supposed to be drawn into the circle of terrorism. However, Lebanon was able to prevent that horror, by preserving its unity despite its severe political divisions. No one crossed the red line facing every civilian, and that preserved the unity and security of Lebanon, despite the fact that some terrorists managed to infiltrate our towns and cities and organize armed cells there. With all of its forces, Lebanon was gradually able to eliminate those terrorist cells. Recently, our army emerged victorious against the terrorist organizations of Da'esh and Jabhat Fath Al-Sham and their armies, and ended their military presence in Lebanon.

The burden that the ongoing war in Syria has caused Lebanon greatly exceeds our capacities. However, the Lebanese people have proved that they are humane and responsible. They have welcomed refugees into their homes, schools and hospitals. They have shared their food and their labour market with them throughout the years of conflict to this very day, thereby drastically increasing the country's unemployment rate. I would like to point out that more than half of our public schools operate in double shift, morning and afternoon, in order to accommodate and educate Syrian children.

Lebanon is a small, densely populated country with limited resources. Its economy has been affected by several crises — first,the global economic crisis, and then the regional wars that have surrounded our country and prevented it from turning to the East and the Arab States that constitute our vital support. Waves of displaced people and refugees have been unleashed, increasing the country's population by a total of 50 per cent, which means that for every two Lebanese citizens there is one displaced person or refugee. Our population density has increased from 400 to 600 people per square kilometre, resulting in severe overcrowding spread over a total of 10,452 square kilometres. That has adversely affected our economy and led to an increase in the rates of various categories of crime.

More dangerous is the fact that terrorist groups have taken shelter in refugee gathering areas and camps, making them fertile terrain for carrying out terrorist activities and claiming the lives of innocent people. We therefore need to regulate the return of displaced persons to their homeland. That need has become urgent as the situation in most of their original residences has settled.

There are those who talk of voluntary return, while we speak of safe return. There is a difference, and the meetings of the International Syria Support Group have

affirmed that difference. Return is either voluntary or safe, depending on the reasons for displacement. In the case of individual or political asylum due to a threat to the safety and security of the individual, the return should be voluntary. That is the case with political refugees, who should themselves decide the timing of their return, which must be coupled with the acceptance of the host country.

As for the current form of collective asylum in Lebanon, it has arisen for economic and security reasons, as an escape from the dangers of war. We therefore call it displacement rather than asylum. It is not coupled with the acceptance of the host country and is not limited to individual asylum; it is, rather, a form of population invasion. As for the claim that such people will not be safe if they return to their country, we are all aware that it is a pretext and that it is unacceptable.

On the one hand, around 85 per cent of Syrian territory has been recovered by the Government. On the other, if the Syrian Government is reconciling with the armed groups that it is fighting and granting them the freedom to choose between remaining in their villages or moving to other regions, what will the Government do with displaced persons who have fled the war? Recent events in Lebanon have confirmed that issue.

On top of this, the displaced are living in misery in an unhealthy environment, despite all the services provided by the international and Lebanese institutions. It is painful for us to be unable to improve their situation, given their great numbers and our limited capacities. There is no doubt that it would be better if the United Nations assisted them in returning to their homeland rather than helping them to remain in camps that lack basic decent living standards.

In addition to the Syrian exodus and the impending financial collapse of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Lebanon is burdened by the 500,000 Palestinian refugees who have been displaced from their homeland for 69 years and are still waiting to return to Palestine. We see no serious effort on the part of the United Nations in general, and the Security Council in particular, to implement a two-State solution. On the contrary, the international community, with all of its institutions, is unable to compel Israel to stop building new settlements. The violence continues unabated because people whose identity and land have been stolen cannot be subjugated.

Israel's approach to the solution has always been based on military force and violation of others' rights. Lebanon is a case in point. Israel has repeatedly violated both Lebanese sovereignty and resolution 1701 (2006). Some days ago, the Israeli air force bombed Syrian territory from Lebanese air space. A few days later, it carried out an imaginary raid, breaking the sound barrier above Saïda and causing material damage. Moreover, from time to time Israel installs spying devices in Lebanese territory. Those violations are not new. Israel has been doing such things for seven decades now. Records show that there are at least 100 land, sea and air violations of Lebanese sovereignty each and every month. Lebanon has lodged complaints with the Security Council, but so far has been unable to stop those violations.

These seven decades of war with Israel have shown that cannons, tanks and planes do not achieve solutions or peace. There can be no peace without rights and there can be no justice without respect for rights. It is clear that the crime of expelling Palestinians from their land and displacing them cannot be rectified by committing the additional crime of compelling Lebanon to impose naturalization on Palestinians and denying them the right of return. The weakening of UNRWA's role is a step towards that goal, seeking to end their refugee status in preparation for their resettlement. Lebanon will not allow that to happen. We will refuse to take in those refugees and displaced persons, whatever happens. The choice is ours and ours alone to make.

All these wars have left deep wounds in our society and citizens. They have destroyed civil attitudes and the principles of coexistence, solidarity, tolerance and acceptance among individuals and groups worldwide. Our region has become trapped in a cycle of poverty and is becoming a hotbed of extremism, thereby creating continually deteriorating crises. Any solution must therefore be coupled with economic and social measures that can boost growth, improve social conditions and ensure a decent and stable life for the people of the region.

I therefore call on Members to seriously consider establishing a common market to ensure that we do not live outside the shadow of freedom. Lebanon is itself a model of diversity. Its people, cultures and civilizations have always been diverse. They are the result of an amalgamation born in ancient times — from Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ, to Arabic, the language of the prophet, in addition to Phoenician, Roman,

Greek, Latin, Persian and Coptic. We must not forget that the Lebanese people have long brought Muslims and Christians of different sects together. Despite a history of war and its repercussions, we have enjoyed peace and its positive aspects. Given our experience in coexistence and our comprehensive culture, Lebanon can be an oasis where the world can meet and engage in dialogue.

After the end of the First World War, the League of Nations was established to maintain world peace. However, it failed and the Second World War broke out only two decades later. At the end of that war, the United Nations was established with the main objective of peacefully resolving disputes among countries and preventing future wars. But has it been successful in achieving that goal? The answer to that question is not difficult. The explosive world around us is the answer.

World War Three has assumed a new form. It is no longer a war among nations, but rather a devastating internal war. Many countries have exploded for religious and ethnic reasons related to extremism and the rejection of others' rights to exist. As for the division of States into sectarian and ethnic groups, it is definitely not the solution and will never prevent wars. On the contrary, that approach can serve only to increase fanaticism, extremism and conflict. The solution will come only through intellectual and cultural change.

Hence the urgent need for an institution dedicated to providing peace education. That has become crucial, since only a new culture of peace and forgiveness that teaches the principles of living together — also known as coexistence, in which people respect freedom of conscience and the right to hold differing opinions — can confront terrorism and create societies capable of establishing peace among people and nations; a culture that brings people together and contributes to strengthening relations among different societies; a culture that assists in adopting the language of dialogue as a means of conflict resolution.

The role and mission of Lebanon is to wage war against the ideology of terrorism. Lebanon, in its pluralistic society, is the antithesis of the unilateralism represented by Da'esh and its peers. That is the basic effort that the United Nations must undertake — to intellectually fight terrorism, which has no geographic borders. It is an intellectual infection, transmitted electronically around the world.

For all of those reasons, I propose Lebanon's candidacy as a permanent centre, independent of the United Nations, for dialogue among different civilizations, religions and races. We hope that Member States will support Lebanon when that proposal is submitted so that we can work together to secure the aspirations of the United Nations as an institution and as nations seeking peace and a decent life for all people in a world of security and stability.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Anastasiades: At the outset, I would like to convey my Government's congratulations to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and assure him of our unwavering support for his mandate.

At the same time, I would like to once again congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on his assumption of his duties since 1 January. The Government of Cyprus and I personally have full faith and confidence in his abilities and vision. To that end, we stand ready to provide all necessary assistance towards achieving our shared goal of promoting the values and principles of the United Nations at a time marked by great uncertainty and instability.

Like the years preceding it, 2017 has been marked by turbulence. To name only a few examples, terrorism, regional conflicts, forced migration, the alarming

effects of climate change and humanitarian crises are realities that have placed an enormous strain on our peoples and the environment. Human nature drives us to work for what is in our best interests and those of future generations — the preservation of our planet, peaceful settlements of conflicts, an end to terrorism and extremism, action to prevent natural disasters, and joint efforts to alleviate the immeasurable human suffering experienced around the world.

There is only one way to achieve that, and it is multilateralism. We stand here as world leaders to pledge our determination and commitment to a better world, through cooperation and joint actions. It is only through collective efforts that we can address crises like the current one with North Korea, which threatens the resilience of our global non-proliferation and disarmament regimes, as well as the peace and security architecture of the region and beyond.

International multilateral cooperation is also vital in dealing with the scourge of terrorism. Terrorist attacks have unfortunately become commonplace in our world, from Baghdad to Kabul, from Paris to Cairo, from Barcelona to London. They target our cities and citizens with cowardly acts of asymmetric aggression. Along with adopting enhanced security measures, it is essential to prevent and counter radicalization and violent extremism within our societies through education, dialogue, economic growth and social inclusion.

There is no security without development, and there is no development without security. Enhancing our societies' resilience is a key aspect of our multilateral endeavours, and in that respect our determination to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must remain high on the list of priorities. Sustainable development is at the heart of dealing with the root causes of forced migration, which for the past two years has dominated the global agenda, and not without cause. The crisis is putting pressure on our societies as well as our Governments, while at the same time it is changing the way political dialogue is conducted. However overwhelming the situation may be, we must not lose sight of the big picture, which is the need for solidarity and burden-sharing.

All these issues, along with the additional challenges that we are facing, point in one direction. We need a just, effective and efficient global governance system. In that regard, we are here to renew our commitment to a global order based on international law, with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations at its core — a global order that ensures that peace, security, human rights and sustainable development remain the highest values that we subscribe to, preserve and uphold. Cyprus believes that the reform priorities that the Secretary-General has laid out are essential to ensuring thatmultilateralism remains relevant and effective in a time of growing scepticism and isolationist tendencies.

The three pillars of reform, in distinct yet parallel and complementary processes, will, if successful, provide us with a changed narrative pertaining to the ability to prevent crises before they erupt, reinforcing and enhancing peacekeeping and peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and long-term development and growth.

The theme of this year's session of the General Assembly — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is extremely relevant to my country, which is still suffering from the scourge of war and its ongoing violent division. In that regard, we firmly believe that the most vital element in achieving inter-State, regional and global peace is respecting and ensuring the full and unhindered independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of each and every State Member of the United Nations — a pillar that constitutes one of the most indispensable provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the most basic rule aimed at prohibiting foreign intervention in the territory, the exclusive economic zone or the internal affairs of independent and sovereign States Members of the United Nations. It is only by adhering to that standard that we can avoid inter-State conflicts and bloody internal clashes, which in turn establish the conditions for prolonged destabilization, violence and uncertainty.

One country that unfortunately continues to endure the consequences of blatant violations of fundamental principles of the United Nations is mine, the Republic of Cyprus, which since the 1974 military invasion of Turkey has remained under its occupation. The pretext for the invasion was the restoration of constitutional order following the attempted coup d'état against the President of the Republic by the Greek military junta. I have deliberately used the word "pretext" since, instead of restoring the constitutional order, Turkey ended up occupying 37 per cent of the territory of Cyprus, while forcibly displacing more than a third of the Greek Cypriot community from their ancestral homeland.

Thousands were murdered, and more than 1,000 Greek Cypriots have been missing since 1974.

By the same use of force, all our Turkish Cypriot compatriots were compelled by Turkey to relocate from the areas controlled by the Government of Cyprus, in which they had been residing peacefully, to the areas occupied by Turkey. In the same context, through the continuous presence of more than 40,000 Turkish troops and thousands of transplanted settlers, in a conscious effort to alter the demographic character of the island, Turkey established an illegal entity under its absolute political, economic, cultural and religious control and dominance.

It is not my intention to engage in a game of blame. On the contrary, I truly wish that I were in the position to inform the Assembly that my vision of reaching a settlement — one that I have repeatedly described from this rostrum — has become a reality. Unfortunately, despite our constructive approach, our tireless and unwavering efforts and the progress achieved, the most recent rounds of talks, which were launched in May 2015 and began to crescendo in July 2017 at Crans-Montana, have reached a deadlock, which is attributable exclusively to Turkey's intransigent position, as reflected in its proposals aimed at reducing Cyprus to a Turkish protectorate instead of being positively predisposed to establishing a truly independent, sovereign and conventional State. One might consider my previous comments to be exaggerated were I not able to substantiate them, as I intend to do now.

In 1960, with the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, among others, under the Treaty of Guarantee, Turkey, Great Britain and Greece set out to guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security of Cyprus. In that regard, I should stress that Turkey's exploitation of that provision has regrettably led to the pain and suffering that the people of Cyprus — Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike — have endured and continue to endure as a consequence of the unacceptable status quo. It is for that exact reason that, since resuming negotiations on establishing a normal and sovereign State and from the very beginning, we have made it our goal to terminate the Treaty of Guarantee and the right of intervention, as well as agree to a sunset clause for full withdrawal of the foreign occupation troops. That is a principled position that the Secretary-General himself holds as an indispensable element in efforts to reach a settlement. As he said on 4 June,

> "Progress in this chapter [that is, the chapter pertaining to security and guarantees] is an essential element in reaching an overall agreement and in building trust between the two communities in relation to their future security".

Based on both the observed progress in the bicommunal dialogue and the Secretary-General's assessment, which I just cited, on 28 June the multilateral Conference on Cyprus opened with great expectations. Following negotiations in an effort to positively support the whole process, the Secretary-General presented an outline of six fundamental thematic topics comprising, on the one hand, the chapter on security and guarantees, including the withdrawal of foreign troops, and, on the other hand, issues related to the internal aspects of the Cyprus problem. Reaching the points of convergence within the Secretary-General's framework would have led to a strategic agreement, thereby injecting a new dynamic and impetus into the process of realizing the valid hope that an overall settlement might be feasible.

In full compliance with the Secretary-General's outline, I submitted credible and realistic proposals that effectively addressed the sensitivities and concerns of both communities, and that, like the Secretary-General's framework, were based on the capacity of the Republic of Cyprus as a State member of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations. In stark contrast to the framework of the Secretary-General and the positions of the other two guarantor Powers, Turkey, in adopting an inflexible position, insisted on maintaining the Treaty of Guarantee and the right of intervention, as well as the permanent presence of troops.

In his statement before the General Assembly at its current session (see A/72/PV.4), the President of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, claimed that the unsuccessful outcome of negotiations at Crans-Montana was attributable to the incomprehensible position of the Greek Cypriot side. In response, I would like to say that I am sorry but I have to reply by asking the Turkish President the following questions.

Is it incomprehensible to aspire to establish an independent and sovereign State without foreign guarantees and the intervention of a third country, while enjoying freedom from the presence of occupation troops?

Is it irrational to advocate establishing a normal State in which all decisions are made only by its citizens, free from foreign dependencies?

Is it unreasonable for an EU member State to efficiently and effectively participate in the decision-making of the European Union?

Is it unfounded to envision terminating the anachronistic Treaty of Guarantee and establishing a robust security system based on the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant treaties of the European Union and the Council of Europe?

Is it against any established principle for the United Nations, as well as the relevant institutions of the EU, to ensure and safeguard the smooth and secure implementation of the provisions of the settlement? And is it a paradox to reject Turkey's insistence that it should assume that role?

Does any constitution of a federal State provide that, for every decision at the federal level, at least one positive vote by the members of the State is required, especially when one of the members of the federation is controlled by a third party?

Finally, could anyone maintain that reaching a settlement based on Turkey's proposals would have led to establishing a functional and viable State?

Despite our disappointment, what I want to emphatically stress and convey is that the vision of the people of Cyprus is simply to end the unacceptable status quo and establish a federal State that would ensure all generations of Greek and Turkish Cypriots conditions of stability for a safe, prosperous and peaceful future; a State free from any foreign interventions and dependencies; a "normal State", as the Secretary-General has very correctly stated; a State led by Cypriots for Cypriots. In that regard, and contrary to the statements made by Turkish officials, it is my intention, at tomorrow's meeting with the Secretary-General, to convey our readiness to immediately resume negotiations in accordance with his framework and in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Within this context, it is widely acknowledged that if a new conference on Cyprus is to convene, and in order to avoid a repetition of the shortcomings of the past, there should be thorough and solid preparations and strong political will and determination on the part of all interested parties and stakeholders so as to ensure that this time deliberations will lead to a positive outcome. For that, I have no doubt that the Secretary-General and the permanent members of the Security Council will offer us their support and help.

At the same time, at this critical juncture we need an alternative to unilateral actions that have a negative effect on the aim of moving the process forward. Mutually agreed confidence-building measures that are in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General, such as the return and resettlement of Varosha to its rightful and lawful inhabitants, would be game-changers in creating a climate conducive to resuming negotiations with the aim of reaching a comprehensive settlement. That aim would be further reinforced through progress on the humanitarian issue of missing persons. To that end, I call on Turkey to fully cooperate in order to resolve this tragic issue. I also take this opportunity to urge all countries that may hold information to open their archives in order to support our efforts to bring an end to this tragic aspect of the Cyprus problem.

In conclusion, I once again urge Turkey and our Turkish Cypriot compatriots to realize that it is only through mutual respect and compromises, not obsolete fixations on failed practices, that we will achieve a viable and lasting settlement that has neither winners nor losers and fully respects and addresses the sensitivities and concerns of both communities. That is the only way for Cyprus to fully utilize its potential and exploit its unique geographical position. That is my vision.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome

to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kaboré (*spoke in French*): The seventy-second session of the General Assembly is being held at a time when the world's ability to make progress faces continued significant challenges. The maintenance of international peace and security, the fight against terrorism and extremism, the eradication of poverty, and the achievement of sustainable development and a fairer and more humane international order are our main concerns today. They test us unremittingly, and we have an urgent and pressing duty to provide rapid and sustainable solutions.

My delegation and I congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his well-deserved election, and I would like to assure him of our full cooperation in his successful conduct of his work. I also thank his predecessor for his effective execution of his mandate.

I would also like to pay tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres who, during his first few months at the head of our Organization, has demonstrated his fully committment to peace and development and his resolve to pursue the ambitious goal of revitalizing the United Nations.

Two years ago we adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to give a new global momentum to peace, prosperity, development, justice and humanism. The entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was welcome in that regard. The establishment of a follow-up and review mechanism for the implementation of the SDGs, as well as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, are also real achievements.

Despite those successes, obstacles remain on the path to building a world of peace and prosperity. I would therefore stress the importance of our theme this session, which restores the human individual to the heart of our global development and governance policies.

We cannot forget that every day in Africa, in my country and in others, men and women are dying because of a lack of care or food, children are not enjoying the fundamental right to education, young people are reduced to facing the rage of the seas and oceans to seek a better future, and entire populations are condemned to wander endlessly as victims of conflicts and disaster, all against the backdrop of an international context overshadowed by terrorism and extreme violence. Obviously, it is now more important than ever to change our paradigms, in our conduct of both domestic and international affairs, in order to move from rhetoric to action and a results-based approach.

The success of the round table of public and private donors to our national plan for economic and social development, following the appeal that I made at this forum on 22 September 2016 (see A/71/PV.15), speaks to our partners' confidence in my country. I would like to take this opportunity to offer them our deep gratitude. Burkina Faso is engaged in a process of economic recovery through major structural reforms, and one of the objectives is to attract, facilitate and secure investments.

With a view to strengthening our participatory democracy by putting citizens in charge of the functioning of the State, Burkina Faso joined the Partnership for an Open Government in 2016. In that context, we are drawing up our first national action plan to strengthen the fight against corruption and improve our quality of governance, in a spirit of cooperation with non-State actors, civil-society organizations and the media. At the same time, an array of reforms aimed at strengthening our democracy and optimizing our institutions is moving ahead smoothly. A preliminary draft constitution has been prepared by representatives of every sector of society, and the judiciary is working independently to resolve the political and economic disputes and crimes that have plagued our national reconciliation efforts for decades.

Targeted for some time by terrorist and obscurantist forces, my country is fully aware of their clearly stated intention to destabilize it and all the countries of the region. The fight against terrorism is therefore a national priority, and will succeed if it is part not only of a subregional approach but also in a context of economic development in the most vulnerable areas.

We are therefore paying particular attention to the north of our country. While there have been some operational successes there, we must bolster them through the emergency investment programme that we recently adopted as a way to reduce the vulnerability of populations, especially young people and women. However — and we cannot reiterate this

enough — terrorism is above all a global scourge. Given that it strikes without discrimination, it calls for a clear and firm condemnation from all of us and an effective collective response based on solidarity and shared efforts and means. That is the raison d'être of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), whose operationalization we are working to accelerate, as the inauguration on 10 September in Sévaré, Mali, of the G-5 Sahel Force Command Centre demonstrated.

I also welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) on 21 June. However, given the gravity of the situation in the area, we must seize the opportunity offered by the consideration of the Secretary-General's forthcoming follow-up report to strengthen the mandate of the Multinational Joint Task Force by providing it with the means necessary to achieve its mission. Similarly, we welcome the establishment of the Sahel Alliance, whose first high-level meeting is scheduled for October.

One of the major challenges in that regard remains the mobilization of resources, as we stressed at the high-level meeting held on 18 September here in New York, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, on the situation in the Sahel. We hope that the international planning conference provided for in resolution 2359 (2017), to be held in Brussels in December, will fulfil all its promises.

The quest for peace must remain at the heart of our common action, especially that of our Organization. In Africa, many hotbeds of tension persist. While we welcome the recent political developments in Mali, it should be noted that the security situation in the north of that country remains highly precarious. I hope that the establishment of a sanctions regime by the Security Council on 5 September, at the request of the Government of Mali, will be an effective additional lever for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We invite all the forces present in Mali — including the National Armed Forces, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Operation Barkhane and the G-5 Sahel force — to work in good faith and in full coordination in order to expedite the definitive return of peace and security to the region.

Mr. Rabary-Njaka (Madagascar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We must remain mobilized to bring to a successful conclusion the processes of conflict resolution or exit from the crises in Libya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan and Burundi. We call on the various protagonists to promote dialogue and reconciliation, and to recognize that they will be the primary owners and architects of peace in their countries. Concerning the question of Western Sahara, Burkina Faso reiterates its call for dialogue and negotiation, in a spirit of compromise, with a view to achieving a political and realistic settlement of the dispute.

The Palestinian issue continues to be a major concern. I welcomed the holding in January of the Paris Conference, which reaffirmed a solution whereby two States, Israel and Palestine, should live side by side in peace and within secure and internationally recognized borders. The commitment of both parties is the only way to end the conflict and achieve a peaceful and definitive settlement.

The efforts of the international community in Iraq, Syria and Yemen must be intensified if we do not wish to see that part of the world sink into perpetual chaos. Burkina Faso is also concerned about the situation in the Gulf Cooperation Council. It urges the protagonists to give priority to dialogue and negotiation in order to end to that crisis.

Burkina Faso condemns North Korea's nuclear tests, which pose a threat to the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and the world. We urge that country to respect the resolutions of the Security Council, and hope that the logic of dialogue and negotiation will prevail over that of escalation and confrontation.

In that context, I reaffirm my country's commitment to general and complete disarmament and its support for the efforts of the United Nations to that end, in relation both to weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. In that regard, I urge all countries, especially those whose ratification is required, to prioritize the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as soon as possible. The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July should give further impetus to that effort.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses one of the main threats to international peace and security. My country, which actively participated in the development of the Arms Trade Treaty, is convinced that its implementation will help to eradicate that scourge, which is a genuine obstacle to the development of our States.

Multilateralism is the tool par excellence of dialogue and solidarity among peoples. In that regard, the international community would certainly benefit from the Republic of China on Taiwan's effective and broader participation in the specialized agencies and mechanisms of the United Nations system. In the name of that same dialogue and solidarity, which characterize peaceful relations among the actors on the international stage, Burkina Faso is in favour of the total lifting of the embargo on Cuba so that Havana and Washington, D.C., can maintain mutually beneficial partnership relations.

United Nations reform remains a central issue for the world's governing body. We must approach it with the courage and serenity that seeing justice done for Africa requires, particularly with regard to its representation on the Security Council. That accords with the African Common Position and our Organization's necessary adaptation to a changing world. At a time of such uncertainty and upheaval, we must shoulder our responsibility to give our citizens reason to believe that a better future lies ahead and that we can bequeath a safer world to the next generation.

The United Nations is the best instrument we have for that. Let us all commit here and now to making the United Nations stronger, more modern and more efficient. In that regard, we know that we can count on the Secretary-General's commitment and determination. I firmly believe that he will play his part in implementing bold reforms so that the United Nations can be a genuine Organization of the people.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Akufo-Addo: It has been 60 years since my country, Ghana, became a Member of the Organization. We joined when we became independent, some 12 years after the first meeting of the Organization in San Francisco, and Ghana has been an active participant in the United Nations ever since.

I want to thank the United Nations for the honour done Ghana by my appointment by the Secretary-General as co-Chair of the advocacy group of eminent persons for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to continue in the position that was held by my predecessor as President, His Excellency Mr. John Dramani Mahama. That mark of trust in Ghana's leaders is a matter of justifiable pride for the Ghanian people, a trust I pledge to uphold.

On 25 September 2015, when the SDGs were adopted, there were sceptics who feared that the Goals were too many and too complex to be successfully tackled, even with concerted effort. The lesson that we have learned from the experience of the Organization, however, is that once the world puts its collective mind to something, the chances are that we will get it right. Every day, something happens to bring home to us, the inhabitants of the planet, that we are in it together.

There is no better or more dramatic indication of that truth than the images that have recently dominated our television screens of devastation caused by floods in Houston, Texas; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Mumbai, India; Palpa, Nepal; Dominica, Puerto Rico, Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Martin, all in the Caribbean, and Niamey, in the Niger. One of the most modern cities in the richest, most powerful nation on our Earth suffered the same fate as did Niamey in the Sahel region of Africa, one of the poorest parts of the world. At the height of the raging storms, one thing became clear. It did not matter if you were in the richest or poorest part of the world, the awesome power of nature was on display and we humans came across as the same sad creatures at the mercy of nature.

As I watched and listened along with the rest of the world, it occurred to me that taken altogether, the SDGs are indeed a worthy set of Goals for the world. They bear repeating — no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions, to be achieved through partnerships for the Goals. We should work hard to achieve the Goals; the world will be a much better place.

Ghana was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain its freedom from colonial rule. This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of its independence, and it is auspicious that I am addressing the Assembly for the first time on the birthday of our historic first President Kwame Nkrumah — the day we have set aside to commemorate him.

We believe that it is time Africa came of age and held its rightful place on the world stage. Africa will be neither a pawn nor a victim. This Africa will be honest with itself and with the world. It will shed its cloak of poverty and become prosperous. We are under no illusions about the hard work it will take to achieve our stated goals, but we are not afraid of hard work. We know that the critical ingredient in making sustainable economic progress is to ensure a stable, democratic system of Government.

I believe that we are making that progress in Ghana. After years of political turmoil and accompanying economic chaos, a consensus has emerged in our Fourth Republic. We have had political stability for the past 25 years and a multiparty democracy in which regular elections are now an accepted feature of our governance. I am here today because of elections last December, in which the people of Ghana voted out an incumbent Government and gave me and my party the mandate and honour to govern our nation for the next four years. We continue to be a beacon of democracy and stability on the continent. Our institutions of State are growing stronger and we have made more progress with our economy than at any time since independence.

We are nowhere near where we want to be, but we are determined to realize our potential and make Ghana a prosperous nation. There will always be the adventurous among us Ghanaians who would want to seek challenges in different parts of the world. We wish them well, and expect that wherever they go they will be welcomed and treated with dignity. But we are working to grow our economy and open up opportunities for all our citizens. No longer should Ghanaians feel that they have to subject themselves to the intolerable and inhumane conditions of crossing the Sahara and drowning in the Mediterranean in hopes of making a living in Europe.

We have just started the free senior high school programme that aims to guarantee secondary education for all of Ghana's children. It will ensure that all our children will be educated at least to the secondary level, and that money, or the lack of it, will no longer mean being denied an education. That has already led to an increase of more than 90,000 children entering secondary school in the current academic year who would otherwise have dropped out at by now. Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, will be within our reach by the target date. We do not want to be a scar on anybody's conscience. We want to build an economy that is not dependent on charity and handouts. Long and bitter experience has taught us that no matter how generous the charity, we would remain poor.

We want to build a Ghana that looks to the use of its own resources and their proper management as the way to engineer social and economic growth in the country. We want to build an economy that looks past commodities in order to position our country in the global marketplace. We are not rejecting aid, but we do want to discard a mindset of dependency and living on handouts. We want to build a Ghana beyond aid. It is an easier platform on which to build sustainable relationships.

In talking about sustainable relations, Africa and, indeed, Ghana are committed to ensuring that we remain a continent free of nuclear weapons. Three weeks ago, highly enriched uranium was flown out of Ghana back to China, signalling the end of the removal of all such material from the country. Our nuclear reactor has since been converted to using low-enriched fuel for power generation. A world free of nuclear weapons is in our collective interest.

I wish to reaffirm my country's commitment to maintaining friendly and cordial relations with all the countries and peoples of the world. Ghana's full

engagement, through the Economic Community of West African States, in the process of West African integration, and through the African Union, in the process of African integration, remains a goal of my Government. Regional and continental integration are in Ghana's interest, as they represent one of the surest ways of establishing the conditions for prosperity on the continent in the decades ahead. They will also help to ensure security and combat the scourges of terrorism, extremism and intolerance.

The conflicts that continue to plague our continent in Libya, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali would be more effectively resolved if the international community were to support and not undermine the efforts of our regional and continental organizations to deal with them. Ghana will also continue to be active in the multilateral organizations to which we belong, such as La Francophonie, the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations, because we believe multilateral action and international cooperation are in our common interest.

We want to build a Ghana that will enable our people to deal with the rest of the world on an equal playing field. I am saying nothing new when I draw attention to the urgent need to reform the Organization. While it has been talked about and scheduled for a long time, we have somehow never found the courage or the will to reform the United Nations. Ghana supports the process of United Nations reform, especially of the Security Council, as set out in the African Common Position on United Nations reform, based on the Ezulwini Consensus. The time is long overdue to correct the long-standing injustice that the current structure and composition of the Security Council represents for the nations of Africa.

We cannot continue to preach democracy and fairness and insist on peace and justice around the world when our global Organization is not seen by the majority of its Member States as having a structure that is just and fair. Indeed, many see it as helping to perpetuate an unfair world order. The Organization provides the best vehicle for the world to manage its many and varied problems, and we would undermine its credibility and fail in our duty if we did not reform the United Nations. Let us not dare to let ourselves and future generations down. The time for reform has come.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Gabonese Republic.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bongo Ondimba (*spoke in French*): At the outset, let me congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his outstanding election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I wish to assure him of Gabon's support in his fulfilment of the mandate entrusted to him. I also commend the valuable work of his predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson.

It is a privilege for me to convey my warm congratulations to the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. I believe firmly that his rich and long experience is a valuable asset to our Organization, and I welcome his special emphasis on conflict prevention in his inaugural speech.

The theme of the general debate of this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", lies at the very heart of our priorities. It reminds us all of the place that the human individual must occupy in our respective actions and of our obligation to reconcile development and durable peace with the preservation of the environment for present and future generations. It is up to us all to act to fashion a human species for whom a decent life for all will be self-evident.

Along with security, peace is an essential prerequisite for the development of Africa, including my country of Gabon. In that connection, Africa continues to occupy the lion's share of the Security

Council's agenda, and my country therefore endorses the African position in favour of a permanent seat for Africa on the Council.

Inasmuch as peace is essential at the international level, peace and security at the national level are the basic ingredients for development and for the participation of all in the democratic debate. Gabon is a country that bears the stamp of peace, and we want to remain the haven of fraternity and solidarity that we have always been. That is why, at the beginning of the year, I convened a political dialogue to which I invited all of the nation's most prominent persons. Everyone who participated in the dialogue was able to candidly discuss all of our country's important issues and desired reforms. We reached compromises that were difficult but also dynamic and necessary — on the voting system, electoral procedures and the organization of powers. Moreover, the implementation of the conclusions of the political dialogue has already begun, with the recent formation of a new Government that includes representatives from the opposition and civil society.

With the adoption first of the Millennium Development Goals and, subsequently, of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Organization is continuing its efforts to mobilize the international community in order to offer humankind a decent life on a preserved planet. Beyond such declarations, however, if we are to achieve the SDGs, the time has come to give the Organization the resources it needs to carry out its work through predictable and sustained financing.

As for Gabon, the new Government is operating under a framework entitled "Emerging Gabon 2025: a vision, a strategy, a road map", aimed at achieving sustainable development and diversifying the national economy. That approach, which seeks to reduce the country's dependence on extractive industries and dampen the volatility of raw-material prices, is already taking shape through an industrial base that is creating jobs and wealth, the Nkok special economic zone.

Gabon has not been spared from the crisis that has affected our entire planet and that has been reflected in an economic slowdown that has had a negative impact on employment, particularly for young people. In response, we have adopted an economic recovery programme aimed at providing new economic momentum through measures that adjust the budget, develop infrastructure and encourage the private sector to leverage our economy's diversification and transformation.

Nevertheless, my Government is striving to offer the people of Gabon better living conditions through a number of measures, ranging from reducing the prices of food staples to building new hospitals. I have also initiated an equal-opportunity programme that will enable all Gabonese people to enjoy the same resources as they embark on a path of personal and collective fulfilment. To that end, I have placed women's empowerment at the heart of the Government's agenda.

The future of our planet will depend on our determination to honour the commitments that we undertook in the Paris Agreement during the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We do not have the right to disappoint our peoples at this historic moment, because the challenges posed by global warming are not simply environmental in nature — they are also political, economic and security challenges. We have even less right to disappoint our peoples, given that the reality that we may wish to ignore calls attention to itself every day with increasingly brutal force, in the form of all the recent environmental disasters. I would like to take this opportunity to express the condolences and moral support of the people of Gabon to the countries that have been victims of the recent hurricanes and cyclones, as well as the victims of the earthquake in Mexico.

Gabon will not deviate from its path. Our public policies will continue to be aimed at managing our resources responsibly and sustainably. In that spirit, my country has just created 20 marine protected areas in addition to our existing 13 national parks on land. I have also instructed the Government to strengthen its reforestation policy so as to ensure the sustainability of our forests. With regard to my country's ongoing commitment to those key issues, I have agreed to lead the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change for the next two years, following the term of my Egyptian brother President Al Sisi. I will be responsible for bringing Africa's voice to all climate-change negotiations.

At the subregional level, my peers have also appointed me Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). My task will be to spearhead an institutional reform process in that important regional integration body. We are even more determined to ensure economic integration in our subregion because we believe that joint development is needed in order to deal with the fluctuations in the

international market. Through its Office in Libreville, ECCAS supports Central Africa in its efforts to deal with the peace and security challenges in the region. In that regard, member countries have confirmed their firm determination to fight the beast of terrorism in all its forms regardless of its motivation.

To that end, the subregional counter-terrorism strategy for Central Africa, which was recently endorsed in Yaoundé and is in line with the African Union counter-terrorism strategy, translates our commitment to eradicating that scourge through concrete steps. I take this opportunity to commend the upcoming holding of a joint summit of ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States on counter-terrorism, which I have always hoped to see happen and which was encouraged by Security Council resolution 2349 (2017). I also commend the initiative taken by the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel to establish a subregional force to effectively combat terrorism and all other threats to peace and security.

Combating terrorism is a multifaceted and long-term struggle that requires cooperation among States and solidarity with the victims of such barbarism. The response cannot be exclusively military. I therefore call for the implementation of the relevant provisions of resolution 2199 (2015) in order to reduce the sources of financing for these criminal networks.

In addition to terrorism, another serious threat to many countries, including mine, is poaching. In that regard, my country has sponsored an important resolution aimed at pooling our efforts to contain the problem, which decimates our flora and fauna and encourages instability in a number of regions, particularly in Africa. Speedy implementation of the recommendations put forward in the resolution is essential and should guide us in seeking the proper balance between the protection of nature and the survival of local populations, who are actually the main victims of poaching.

Among the worrying current situations in Africa, that in the Central African Republic requires our sustained attention. Gabon continues to have a presence in that brother country as part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. I call on our various partners to support the action plan developed by ECCAS and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, as well as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

Similarly, the arms embargo must be lifted for the legal and legitimate Government of the Central African Republic exclusively, so that it can restore security and its authority throughout the national territory. The resilience and defiance of the negative forces that are ravaging the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and other parts of the Central African subregion derive their strength from the illegal exploitation of underground natural resources and wildlife. International measures designed to combat the illegal trade in such resources must be properly enforced if we wish to defeat the armed groups that continue to carry out such criminal activities.

Working to foster peace also requires eliminating weapons of mass destruction by implementing the relevant international instruments. Some parts of the Middle East have been the focus of the serious threats to international peace and security caused by the nebulous terrorist organization known as the Islamic State, which is exacerbating instability in Syria and Iraq.

In that connection, we must address the question of Palestine, which remains a thorn in the side of the international community. In my view, the resumption of direct talks between the two sides remains the only way to reach a solution. I commend the efforts by the United States and France to push for a resumption of the peace process.

Similarly, we have noted the recent events on the Korean peninsula and remain firmly committed to peace and stability in that part of the world. We call for strict compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions in that regard.

Another major human tragedy unfolding before our eyes is the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar. In the twenty-first century it is simply unacceptable that men, women and children are being killed or forced to flee their country for the mere fact that they belong to a particular religious community. The Assembly's universal conscience cannot and must not accept that.

Finally, and in connection with international solidarity and justice, lifting the embargo that has plagued Cuba for several decades is only fair.

Our Organization is blowing out its seventy-second candle. Its universal vocation has been firmly established. I am confident that, with our collective

determination, it will be able to overcome the current multifaceted challenges to peace and security in the world. That is why prioritizing human beings by ensuring peace and a decent life for all on a protected planet is no longer a simple ambition but a collective duty.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Gabonese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mansour (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government and the people of Yemen, I sincerely congratulate the President and his friendly nation, Slovakia, on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and wish him every success in his endeavours. I would also like to express my great appreciation for the significant efforts of his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, in guiding the work of the previous session.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his exceptional efforts in implementing the Organization's noble mission of maintaining international peace and security, and in employing all its good offices with a view to achieving sustainable peace in my country, Yemen. We are also grateful to his Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

This debate is being held as we in the Republic of Yemen are ending our third year of the war imposed on our people by the Houthi/Saleh coalition, following its rebellion against the consensus solutions adopted under the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism and the outcomes of the national dialogue, as well as the political process carried out fully under the auspices of the United Nations. The political process culminated in a visit to Sana'a by the former Secretary-General, where he held a special meeting with the Security Council in Yemen. The evil Houthi/Saleh coalition has rebelled against the national consensus, which was based on the outcomes of the national dialogue and included all the Yemeni political parties and social factions. It has used violence and terrorism to rebel against the legitimately elected leadership and armed force against our people. It has destroyed the cities of Yemen and taken the entire country hostage.

After exhausting every possible peaceful political means to turn this evil coalition away from the path of violence and terrorism that it has chosen, the Yemeni people, in all their various factions, have united and resisted the rebels' de facto policy of facilitating Iranian expansionism in our region. To that end, we have requested support, on behalf of the people of Yemen, from our brothers in the Arab coalition under the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They have responded to our request and granted us support.

The theme of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly represents what we have been seeking in Yemen. Through negotiations in Geneva, Vienna and Kuwait, our legitimate leadership has sought a sustainable, fair and lasting peace that will not falter and that lays the foundation for a real State that ensures peace and security for all its citizens and prevents violence. We seek a peace that grants the State alone a monopoly on the use of force and prevents armed militias from forming and operating in the country. It must be a peace that is based on consensual documents that people have agreed on and that have received international and regional support.

Here, I would like to clarify a commonly heard claim that our problem in Yemen is one of political differences that cannot be managed merely by sitting around negotiation tables, despite our efforts and compromises in that regard. But what we are facing is not even a coup d'état as it is commonly understood. It transcends that and is based on a difference in philosophies, ideologies and values. We are dealing with extremist religious sects that believe that God has granted them an ethnic superiority and the right to rule, to forge alliances with forces that seek retaliation

and that go against all human values. In this way, the coup of the Houthis, who are racist, backward and patrilineal, has gone beyond any traditional military coups d'état, which still preserve the State and its institutions. These militias are destroying all State institutions. The army and security forces have been replaced by popular committees and militias that serve one faction only, based on ethnicity. That also affects economic institutions.

Our resources are utterly depleted, and we have not even been able to pay salaries for almost a year. The private sector has disappeared, replaced by a new class of merchants who function at the expense of our national interests. Even our school curricula have been replaced with extremist curricula that have provoked sectarian strife. On top of all that, the opposition militias receive full support, politically and militarily, in kind, in the form of weapons and financing from Iran, a State that is determined to destabilize our region. Sustained peace can therefore only be possible if Iran ceases to interfere in our affairs, which it has been doing by creating tensions, inventing conflicts and stoking feelings of hatred and violence. We must control Iran's expansionist aspirations in the region.

Member States may remember that when I stood before the Assembly five years ago, I spoke of the measures that we would take on the path of peaceful political transition in Yemen in the context of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and the National Dialogue Conference outcomes (see A/67/PV.9), and I informed them that Iran had been taking various measures against us. We have seized shipments carrying arms, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards have been supporting the militias in our country and supplying them with long-range missiles. They remain a threat to our country and the entire world.

I am trying to give Member States an image of the events from the inside. The world needs to understand that the rebels are refusing all calls for peace — from Kuwait to Geneva — including the latest initiative about the port of Al Hudaydah. We announced that we were ready to accept the initiative on the Hudaydah seaport, but the other side has unilaterally rejected it. They even attempted to assassinate an international envoy. They have continued to threaten international peace and security and international maritime sea lanes. They have also threatened our brothers in the United Arab Emirates, attacking them with rockets.

From this rostrum, I emphasize our continued willingness to stop the war and build peace. We are not warmongers. We desire peace. And I have personally extended my hand, and will continue to do so, to reach a sustainable peace, because we feel the weight of our responsibility for all citizens of the Yemeni State. I affirm that we continue to desire peace based on the consensus agreements and everything that the international community has endorsed, including the implementation of Security Council resolution 2216 (2015).

I must not forget here to thank our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who have led the efforts to mitigate our humanitarian crisis through the support that their country continues to provide through the King Salman Centre for Humanitarian Aid and Relief, and to thank all of the humanitarian organizations of the Arab coalition, donor countries and the United Nations agencies, as well as all the international efforts to combat the cholera outbreak. We stress that we are still in need of support and assistance, given our high levels of poverty, insecurity and food insecurity. We are still under blockade and at war. The city of Taiz has been under siege for three years.

The situation is dire in all of the governorates under rebel control. Salaries are no longer being paid. The State's resources, including customs incomes, have been looted. We therefore call on the United Nations and the international community to shoulder their responsibilities in Yemen by applying pressure on the rebels to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and offer real compromises, so that we can avoid more bloodshed and destruction and so that humanitarian assistance can reach the people who need it.

From this rostrum I announce that we in the Yemeni Government are ready to provide all of the facilitation needed so that humanitarian assistance can have access everywhere in Yemen, from Sana'a to Al-Mahra, as well as in the areas under Houthi control. We are responsible before God first and before our people and the world as well. We are responsible for all our Yemeni people, regardless of their loyalties. We want to preserve the life of every Yemeni, including those who fire bullets at us and target the Yemeni people. As a legitimately elected leader, it is my job to save the Yemeni people from further bloodshed. It is forbidden for a Yemeni to kill another — absolutely forbidden.

The Yemeni Government continues to face the economic and security challenges that stem from the destruction of all aspects of Yemeni life. Today, the Yemeni Government needs extensive support for its efforts to consolidate peace and stability, provide services in the liberated areas, control the economic situation and implement counter-terrorism measures.

We call on friendly donor countries and international organizations to provide urgent support to Yemen and uphold the pledges made at the conference held in Geneva in April in support of the humanitarian response plan for Yemen. One year has passed, and only 50 per cent of the pledged funding has been provided. We also want to reactivate the dormant Group of Friends of Yemen. We must save Yemen from the crisis and move from humanitarian relief to reconstruction and economic recovery.

The Republic of Yemen sincerely and effectively supports counter-terrorism efforts, particularly because my country has long suffered from terrorism. We reject all forms of terrorism and continue to embrace our tolerant Islamic values, which reject violence and extremism, while calling for tolerance and brotherly relations. We reach out to the international community to coordinate efforts in the areas of security, culture and information and technology, so that we can defeat terrorism together.

Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and its settlement policies still represent one of the greatest causes of stress in our region. The people of our region therefore look to the Assembly to find a fair and lasting solution so that the Palestinian people can establish their own State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and end the occupation and settlement, as well as the suffering of the Palestinian people.

The Republic of Yemen denounces the plight of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. That genocide must cease. Terrorism in the State must stop, and we call on the international community to uphold its responsibilities and prevent such monstrous events, which we thought our modern world had permanently eliminated.

Together with our patient people and all the honourable citizens of the world, we will spare no effort to rid the Yemeni people of the atrocities committed by the rebels. We will, with God's help, fulfil the aspirations of our people to build a federal civil State that upholds justice and equality and good governance. We will rebuild a new Yemen that embraces all of its children — a Yemen that is a source of stability and security for itself, its neighbours and the world.

I should not conclude without expressing my sincere congratulations to all Yemeni people and freedom-loving nations on the occasion of the fifty-fifth anniversary of our revolution, on 26 September, which we will commemorate in the next few days. That revolution uprooted one of the most despotic regimes in histor, that of Imam Ahmed in northern Yemen, whom liberators toppled to found our Republic in 1963.

We are reminded of that racist regime by the Houthis and their allies. Over the past three years, they have tried to impose a similarly racist regime once again, in an even more violent and terroristic manner. During the time that our capital of Sana'a has been under Houthi control, thousands have been killed, injured or detained. The media have been outlawed and journalists arrested, along with countless other retaliatory measures. We must control that racist group. I salute our people on the occasion of the revolution's anniversary.

In conclusion, I wish the General Assembly every success at its seventy-second session and hope that it can achieve more development and effectiveness in its work. And I wish all Member States and human society prosperity, peace and stability.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Yemen for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.12

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 September 2017, 12.10 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rabary-Njaka (Madagascar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 12.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Seychelles.

Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Faure: I would like to join those who have spoken before me in congratulating His Excellency Mr Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would also like to thank His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson for making the small island developing States and the rest of the international community proud through his strong leadership of the seventy-first session.

May I start by saying that the thoughts of the Government and the people of Seychelles go out to the millions of people in South Asia, Africa, the United States and Mexico, as well as our island brothers and sisters in the Caribbean, who have suffered unimaginable losses from floods, hurricanes and other forms of extreme weather these past months.We urge the international community to not only respond generously to those countries' calls for support, but also to take the need to upscale the urgent action required far more seriously in order to prevent, prepare for, adapt to and recover from such increasingly destructive climate-related disasters.

Events around the world today sadly show that the theme of this year's general debate, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", cannot be achieved without effective implementation of the principles of democracy and a concerted demonstration of will. That calls for good governance, transparency and accountability, which serve as the foundation for the prosperity and security of all nations. Indeed, they put the rights and aspirations of the people at the centre of development, where prosperity is shared by all. We must create the necessary space in society for diverging views and ideas to flourish and be respected. Doing so helps promote unity, tolerance and respect in the population.

Seychelles is, for the first time in its history, experiencing a system of political cohabitation where I, as President and head of the executive arm, am working with a legislature dominated by the opposition. When I first addressed our legislature at the National Assembly almost a year ago last October, I gave my word that we would work together to deliver a better future for our people. Our cohabitation is working well.

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There is a new working environment in which we have dialogue and where we consult. Most importantly, it is an environment based on mutual respect. We are reshaping our Government to make it more inclusive. We are empowering our citizens, especially our youth, by giving them equal opportunities to play important roles in the development of our country and the growth of our economy. In that context, we are improving the environment for free media to play a vital role in nation-building efforts.

Together with the National Assembly we are amending legislation relating to institutions, authorities and agencies so as to ensure that they reflect the new principles of good governance. With greater transparency, good governance and accountability, the independence of institutions and authorities will continue to increase. They are the bedrock of our society.

We are writing a new chapter in Seychelles, where we work together to overcome our challenges and show respect for all opinions in the interest of a Seychelles that unites all of us despite our differences. Openness and a policy of discourse are at the core of my nation's willingness to secure a bold future for our people. I believe that small island developing States such as mine can serve as the moral barometers for what is right. We do not shy from accepting and learning from the experiences of others but, in that regard, we also have valuable lessons to share with others. The path that we are charting in our country can serve as an example to all for the sake of tolerance and a global lasting peace.

(*spoke in French*)

That has been our experience in Seychelles. But as we look around us, what do we see? We see growing instability on a national and regional scale. That is a hindrance to peace and to a decent and sustainable life for all of our peoples. We believe that such factors lie at the heart of the global refugee crisis. That is a problem that could worsen owing to the increasing movements of populations as a result of climate change.

A globalized world economy requires us to act as organized regions in order to give ourselves the best possible chance of transforming our hopes into tangible improvements in the quality of life for our peoples by strengthening the values of democracy and good governance.

That also applies to this institution — the United Nations. Indeed, after a quarter of a century of reforms and counter-reforms of the Security Council, it is high time to harken to the deafening call of more than 160 States Members of the United Nations for true and just reforms. That would be a way for us to react to the accusations that the United Nations is simply a room in which to hold rambling discussions. We would also have an opportunity to practice what we preach.

(*spoke in English*)

For there to be peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet, it is not enough just to throw more resources — financial, human and others — into implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. All of those processes should be democratically governed, underpinned by transparency and accountability throughout and in harmony with and with respect for the natural environment in which we live.

In Seychelles, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations and parliamentarians have joined with the public sector in a national effort to integrate the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals into our country's budget and development plans. Together we are drafting a new national development strategy and a more sustainable national development plan for Seychelles over the next 15 years called Vision 2032. That exercise also includes the integration of Agenda 2063, adopted by the African Union, and the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action.

The same inclusive approach applies to stepping up our implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in the light of recent developments. According to the latest science, all stakeholders need to be involved if the international community is to drastically upscale our collective climate action so as to achieve our targets. There is something that I said at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Marrakech in November 2016 that is even more pertinent today, as we head towards the next Conference of the Parties, led by our fellow small island developing State of Fiji and supported by Germany. Referring to the Paris Agreement, I said,

> "For the very first time in history, a global climate-change deal, giving renewed hope to the world, has been reached. We find ourselves at a crossroads and cannot afford to renege on our

collective commitment to travel the moral path for the sake of humanity."

From small islands come big ideas. Last year Seychelles reached an agreement with the Paris Club and others on a first-of-its-kind $21 million debt-for-adaptation swap to protect 30 per cent of our 1.37-million-square-kilometre exclusive economic zone, partly as an ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change. Also, by the end of this year, we aim to launch the world's first blue bonds to raise another $15 million for sustainable fishing practices in our waters. Both of those measures seek to establish innovative sources of financing to implement Sustainable Development Goal 14, on oceans and seas, and other interlinked SDGs as part of developing the Seychelles' blue economy. We thank our many partners at home and abroad who have helped us on this bold and exciting new path to sustainable development and resilience to climate change and who continue to be actively involved.

The President took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Fiji and Sweden for the great success of the Ocean Conference in June and its Call for Action. As President of a large-ocean developing State, I would like to reiterate Seychelles' commitment to continuing to play a pioneering role in the search for innovative ways to respond to the Call for Action and implement SDG 14 as an integral part of all the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

On that positive note, I wish all the peoples of the world a happy International Peace Day.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Seychelles for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Dany Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Masisi (Botswana): I feel deeply honoured and privileged to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the Republic of Botswana, His Excellency Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama.

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your mandate. In the same vein, please allow me to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, for his stewardship of the Assembly at its seventy-first session.

I would also take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our new Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and his Deputy and wish them an enjoyable and successful tenure at the helm of our world body. We also thank our former Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his leadership and the valuable contribution he made towards advancing the mandate of the Organization over the past decade.

We are gathered here at the United Nations because we share a common destiny. Despite its imperfections, the United Nations remains the only universal organization that has the moral authority and legitimacy to seek global solutions to the challenges we face. Botswana is of the firm conviction that as Member States, we collectively hold the will and the power to change the world for the better and for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Botswana welcomes the theme of this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". We strongly feel that that theme is pertinent because it reinforces the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which the global community adopted on 25 September 2015 as a "plan of action for people, planet and prosperity" or a charter for "people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership" in the twenty-first century (resolution 70/1). That theme appropriately draws our attention to four of the five Ps of the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. It recognizes the importance of

focusing on people and improving their lives, as they are both the main beneficiaries of development and its greatest resource, as we work to achieve peace and development on a sustainable and resilient basis. The theme thus recognizes the nexus between peace and security, sustainable development and climate change.

In that regard, the 2030 Agenda notes that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. It is therefore imperative that we give priority to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in order to achieve sustainable development and address climate change.

With regard to people, I am pleased to state that the Government of Botswana embarked on a series of multi-stakeholder consultations involving both the public and the private sectors, civil society, local authorities, development partners and academia in the formulation of our National Development Plan 11, which runs from 2017 to 2023, and in the formulation of our current Vision 2036, which runs from 2017 to 2036. The Plan and the Vision are both aligned to the 2030 Agenda and the African Union Agenda 2063. We purposefully undertook extensive consultations so as to ensure that our national priorities reflect our people's needs and aspirations. We hold the view that our people have a right to sustainable development and improved quality of life. We must, therefore, pursue those twin objectives as a moral and political imperative.

It is important to recall that when we adopted Agenda 2030 two years ago, we acknowledged that every goal, every target and every indicator in the Agenda represents a step towards a better world. We recognized the need for each country, based on its needs and circumstances, to formulate a unique set of actions to achieve the universal goals that we set for ourselves. We also recognized that innovation, science and technology will be critical catalysts in the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In line with the theme of the seventy-second session, our two national development frameworks place heavy emphasis on improving the quality of life of all people in Botswana through the acceleration of socioeconomic development and the provision of better education, health care and housing, and by tackling extreme poverty, income inequality, gender inequality and unemployment, especially among young people and women. Driven by our strong desire to build an inclusive, peaceful and prosperous society based on the respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, we accordingly adjusted our empowerment programmes in order to ensure that they cater to all vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our society, including women and girls, young people, the elderly, people with disabilities, and children.

To that end, the top priorities of our National Development Plan 11 are human-capital development, social development, the development of diversified sources of economic growth, the sustainable use of natural resources, the consolidation of good governance, the strengthening of national security and the implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system.

In order to ensure that all our people live in dignity, the Government of Botswana took a bold policy decision to shift from poverty reduction to the eradication of extreme poverty, which resulted in a marked reduction in the proportion of the population living in abject poverty or below $1.25 per day, from 24.5 per cent in 2002-2003 to 6.4 per cent in 2009-2010. That is a notable achievement considering the fact that in 1985-1986, 59 per cent of the population was living in poverty.

We identified the sustainable use of natural resources as one of the main priorities of our national development agenda so as to ensure that the natural wealth of our country benefits both present and future generations. To address youth unemployment, the Government introduced youth-empowerment programmes, such as the Youth Development Fund, the National Service Programme and the Internship Programme. For the past two decades, more than 25 per cent of the Government's total annual budget has been invested in education and skills development.

In addition, we have implemented a number of flagship programmes, the centrepiece of which is the Economic Stimulus Programme, which was introduced to stimulate the economy and address the infrastructure deficit. We are also proud that Botswana was among the countries that shared their 2030 Agenda implementation experience under the auspices of the recently held High-level Political Forum and Voluntary National Review exercises.

On climate change, Botswana fully supports the observation made in the 2030 Agenda that

> "[c]limate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development" (*resolution 70/1, para. 140*).

In that regard, we welcome the entry into force of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change and reaffirm our commitment to that agreement. Botswana is pleased to be among the countries that signed and ratified the Agreement before the threshold for ratifications for its entry into force was reached. We appeal to all countries to remain steadfast in their defence and protection of the integrity of the Paris Agreement.

We reiterate our appeal to the Government of the United States of America to reconsider its decision to withdraw from that landmark agreement, which marks a universal effort by the international community to tackle the challenges of climate change. As those present are aware, the challenge of climate change requires collective action, as no single country can successfully address the challenge on its own. It is as if the recent hurricanes and their disastrous effects were meant to underscore to the American Administration that climate change is real. If there is anything positive that we have learned from those hurricanes, it is that it has been able to bring people in the affected states and wider America together — be they young or old, black, Hispanic or white or of whatever religious persuasion.

We also welcome the recent convening by the President of the General Assembly of the first ever Ocean Conference in New York, pursuant to Sustainable Development Goal 14. Even though Botswana is a landlocked country, we are impacted in one way or the other by the ocean environment. We also have a strategic interest in benefiting from marine resources. It is for that reason that we actively participated in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, to which we subsequently became a State party.

I am delighted to announce that Botswana has responded positively to international humanitarian appeals, which have been made from time to time in response to humanitarian calamities that have afflicted a number of countries, including the extremely devastating famine in Somalia. Consistent with our caring and compassionate nature, we will continue to do everything we can, within the limit of our meagre resources, to extend assistance to fellow members of the human family who are in dire need of humanitarian relief.

On international peace and security, the Charter of the United Nations states that the Organization was created "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", and yet peace continues to elude us, especially in some parts of Africa, as well as in other parts of the world. There are continuing reports of raging conflicts, gross human rights violations, extra-judicial killings, sexual violence and arbitrary arrests and detentions.

The situation in South Sudan, in particular, continues to be a cause for grave concern. The country is virtually on a precipice. The people of that country have yet to enjoy the peace that the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of August 2015 was widely expected to deliver. We therefore appeal to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development countries, as the main guarantors of the Agreement, to constructively engage the leaders and political stakeholders in South Sudan, with a view to getting them to unconditionally commit to the full and effective implementation of the Agreement.

On Syria, the political, security and humanitarian situation there remains catastrophic. Botswana is on record as having consistently expressed disappointment at the Security Council's failure to take decisive action on the situation in Syria. That failure is due to the fact that some permanent members of the Council have, from time to time, vetoed resolutions that were aimed at addressing the political and humanitarian crisis in the country.

In view of that unfortunate scenario, Botswana believes that the international community should always resort to using the moral power and authority of the General Assembly whenever there is paralysis in the Security Council. We also fully support the referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, in order for those responsible for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity to be held accountable for their actions.

Botswana is deeply concerned about the unrelenting and blatant contravention of international law and United Nations resolutions by North Korea through its continued testing of ballistic missiles. Those despicable acts by North Korea pose a threat, not only to the Korean peninsula, but throughout the Pacific region and the world at large. It is obvious to us, as it should

be to everyone else, that North Korea is being assisted by others in its development of missiles and nuclear technology. They are, therefore, as much to blame for those missile and nuclear tests as North Korea itself is.

We therefore appeal to the international community to work in unison and take prompt and decisive action that will force North Korea to adhere to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Inaction is not an option in the face of such adversity. Regime change must be brought about in order to remove, once and for all, the everlasting threat to peace in that region and give the North Korean people hope for a life of freedom and prosperity.

On Western Sahara, it is reprehensible that that territory remains the only non-self-governing territory on the African continent. We therefore reiterate our support for and solidarity with the people of Western Sahara in the pursuit of their just and inalienable right to self-determination. We strongly feel that it is high time that they be allowed to exercise that right through an independent and impartial vote under the supervision of the United Nations. The Sahrawi have waited long enough for that to happen. We similarly support the people of Palestine in their legitimate struggle for sovereignty and independent statehood. As a gesture of our support and solidarity, I am pleased to report that Botswana established diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine on 8 March.

Botswana strongly condemns terrorism, violent extremism and racial intolerance in all their forms and manifestations. In that regard, it is deeply regrettable that we have recently witnessed a spate of terrorist attacks on innocent people and Governments around the world. I wish to state that we stand firmly in solidarity with the Governments and the peoples of the countries concerned and extend our deepest sympathy to them. We need to be constantly mindful of the fact that no single country is immune to terrorist attacks. Those attacks are a stark reminder of the ferocious nature of terrorism. The international community must, therefore, urgently take concerted action to resolutely fight that scourge.

Botswana fully supports the international community's efforts towards nuclear disarmament. We also reaffirm our commitment to international instruments that ban weapons of mass destruction, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and the Biological Weapons Convention. In that regard, we welcome the recent adoption by the General Assembly of a legally binding treaty to prohibit the production of nuclear weapons. We are fully convinced that only a nuclear-free world will guarantee a safer future for our populations.

Botswana greatly values the opportunity it was given to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights through its membership in the Human Rights Council for two consecutive terms. With the imminent end of our tenure in the Council in December, I wish to reaffirm that we will continue to work earnestly with the international community to advance the global human rights agenda and so that all the people of the world can live in democracies where human rights and the rule of law are upheld. Our advocacy on human rights is premised on the firm belief that society's aspirations for sustainable development will remain a mirage unless we redouble our collective efforts towards equality and human dignity.

In conclusion, I would like to urge everyone to maintain the momentum on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Let us summon our collective wisdom and strength, coupled with our singularity of purpose, to deliver real change for the benefit of the peoples we represent. Botswana pledges to be an active and reliable partner in the common endeavour to create a better and safer world of shared prosperity, where no people, no region and no country will feel left behind. That is the best legacy we can collectively bequeath to posterity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia

Mr. Andrey Plenković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Andrey Plenković, Prime Minister

of the Republic of Croatia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Plenković (Croatia) (*spoke in English*): Let me take this opportunity to offer my sincere condolences to all those affected by the destruction wrought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria and to the people of Mexico, who have been hit by successive earthquakes in past few days.

Twenty-five years ago, my country's first President, Franjo Tuđman, addressed the General Assembly as Croatia was being admitted to the United Nations (see A/47/PV.7), which brought us back into the fold of free nations. At that time, he appealed to the international community to help end the aggression against Croatia and establish lasting peace. Since then, my country has been rebuilt, modernized and profoundly transformed and has become one of Europe's top tourist destinations. Today Croatia is a State member of the European Union and NATO. Building on its unique historical circumstances, we are now actively participating in peacekeeping operations around the globe and providing development aid to societies in need.

I address the Assembly as the Prime Minister of a country that in that relatively short time has served on the Security Council, presided over the Economic and Social Council and chaired the Peacebuilding Commission, and which is currently a member of the Human Rights Council.

Today we celebrate the International Day of Peace. I would like to reiterate that, as a peace-loving nation — as symbolized here at the United Nations by the recently restored *Peace Monument* by our great sculptor, Antun Augustinčić — Croatia is a strong advocate of a rules-based international order. At the national and global levels, we believe that institutions need to be more open to the public and genuinely involve people in their decision-making. It is only through an active and informed citizenry that we can make Governments accountable and create credible institutions.

Only well-functioning institutions ensure the implementation of the rule of law. Such citizen involvement brings about a welcome mix of representative and participatory democracy by bringing forward substantiated arguments and avoiding superficial and misleading populism. Croatia places great emphasis on peace, justice and strong institutions as one of the 17 goals to transform our world.

Our own experiences in building State institutions were a particular challenge for a country that achieved peace and re-established its territorial integrity only 20 years ago. Croatia is dedicated to assisting others in post-conflict transitions with its own experiences in reconciliation and confidence-building.

We were a recipient of international security assistance, including through several United Nations missions. One of the most successful peacekeeping missions to date was the United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, which ended in January 1998 with the peaceful reintegration of our formerly occupied territories. We put at the world's disposal that unique know-how and extensive expertise as a useful complementary contribution to the international community's efforts in similar situations, such as with the implementation of the Minsk agreements in Ukraine, where we can draw many parallels.

Discussing strong international organizations globally also means addressing the strength of this institution — the United Nations. As the world changes, our firm belief is that the United Nations must also keep up and change. Croatia supports the Secretary-General's drive to reform the Secretariat, especially in peacekeeping and development. The Secretary-General's surge in diplomacy is also a much-needed development.

Security Council reform is central to United Nations reform. It is vital that its membership — both permanent and non-permanent — be regionally balanced and more reflective of the world 70 years into the Organization's life. In particular, we believe that the path to achieving that goal would be expedited by enlarging both categories of membership, including by ensuring that the Group of Eastern European States is better represented in the Security Council's non-permanent membership.

One of the effects of globalization is that the world is faced with an unprecedented number of people on the move. Refugee crises and mass migration are a reality. One in 30 people around the world is a migrant. Croatia has faced acute refugee and migrant crises in the past. The approach we took — and will always take — was one that put people first. In the context of the upcoming negotiations on the global compact on migration, we advocate an approach to human mobility that prioritizes the safety, dignity and the human rights

and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, no matter where they come from or where they are headed.

As with all global challenges, a holistic approach is required in that regard. We therefore need to work together to fight the root causes of mass migrations — be it poverty, failing States and wars or climate change and natural disasters — while standing against exploitation and abuse in the context of human trafficking and people smuggling. In the framework of the European Union, Croatia is working with its partners on stemming the illegal flows of people, especially from the Eastern Mediterranean-Balkan route, while at the same time providing concrete support to countries of origin to address root causes, in particular through its development aid programmes.

In addressing crises across the globe, our focus should be on early warning, prevention and diplomacy. Any post-conflict measure comes too late, especially in terms of human life. Conflicts need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and require tailor-made approaches. While a consistent approach to conflicts by the United Nations, and in particular by the Security Council, is essential for the Organization's credibility, copy-pasted, one-size-fits-all approaches are not the most effective way to proceed.

In understanding the situation and risks on the ground, we must in particular draw on the knowledge and experience of local populations, neighbouring countries and regional organizations. Croatia believes that when addressing conflicts and crises — be it in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Yemen or anywhere else in the world — it is important to have a global, comprehensive approach based on solidarity and coordinated international effort under strong United Nations leadership. Such an approach would include political, humanitarian, socioeconomic, stabilization and security elements, and in which reconstruction goes hand in hand with reconciliation and building resilience.

Our contribution to peacekeeping operations will continue to be an important component of our foreign policy, both through direct participation and sharing our experiences and expertise or know-how. Croatia has contributed to 19 United Nations peacekeeping operations to date, and we are currently preparing our contribution to United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Like many other countries, apart from United Nations peacekeeping operations, we also participate in international operations led by other organizations, such as the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal values. We should spare no effort in their promotion and protection. Any violation of human rights requires an immediate and appropriate response. We advocate tighter links between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council. We also acknowledge the importance of the principle of the responsibility to protect. We take particular pride in the fact that one of Croatia's top diplomats leads the United Nations efforts in that regard.

We welcome the establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, as it is evident that there is a real need for strategic coordination and leadership for our global counter-terrorism efforts. It is also necessary that we continue working on preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism.

Croatia fully supports the recent unanimous Security Council action on North Korea, whose actions represent a direct threat to international peace and security. We appeal to the North Korean authorities to discontinue developing and testing nuclear weapons and to fully meet their commitments under international law, the relevant to the Security Council resolutions and the global non-proliferation regime.

Adherence to the standards, principles and rules of international law and their faithful implementation provide a firm foundation for lasting peace and stability worldwide, to which we are deeply attached. In that regard, I would particularly like to recall the principles of good faith and free consent. We believe that disputes should be resolved through peaceful means and in conformity with international law.

It is of the utmost importance that all international adjudications meet the highest legal standards and fully respect their own relevant rules. Compromising the impartiality or independence of international adjudicators or tribunals, as was the case in the terminated arbitration process between Croatia and Slovenia, makes their decisions legally void — and left Croatia with no choice other than to withdraw from the arbitration process.

We consider that that example of undermining the rule of law is a discouragement for States considering third-party dispute settlement. At the same time, we want to solve the open border issue with our

neighbouring friend and ally Slovenia through bilateral dialogue. In addition, Croatia strongly supports the full and unequivocal implementation of all applicable rules of international humanitarian and criminal law, as well as the full investigation and punishment of all atrocities.

Preserving peace and stability in South-East Europe is obviously of key importance for my country. While the world faces many overwhelming challenges, we should bear in mind that regional stability in South-East Europe is still to be entrenched. By transferring our knowledge and promoting the integration of the countries of South-East Europe into the European Union and NATO — if they so wish — Croatia actively encourages stability in the region.

We believe in building strong societies in our neighbourhood, while aiming to shift away from containing crises towards prevention, political dialogue and active engagement. That is especially important in neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the proper implementation of the constitutional equality of its three constituent peoples — Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats — is a prerequisite for ensuring the full functionality and stability of the State and its European integration process, which we wholeheartedly support.

Two years ago, through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community properly recognized the limits to the reach of individual Governments. Universal challenges indeed demand our joint response. In addition, cooperation with academia, the business community and civil society is indispensable, but it would be unwise not to also tap the ideas and ingenuity of each individual in our respective societies, especially of our youth, who, in the age of modern technology, are absorbing knowledge and acquiring skills in a faster and more open manner. It is therefore our global task to adjust our educational systems to form future responsible citizens, to give them job opportunities and fit the real needs of our labour markets. Coming from Croatia, the homeland of the great inventor Nikola Tesla, I cannot but stress how vitally important it is that the United Nations facilitate a transformation towards the age of the digital economy and narrow the digital divide, which could generate new inequalities.

Eradicating poverty remains our primary development objective, since it is a cause and consequence of conflict, instability and crises. But it is only by paying equal attention to transformational, cross-cutting elements — such as human rights, equality, good governance, the rule of law and inclusive societies — that we will be able to achieve true sustainable development.

As we are witnessing the daily erosion of climate conditions and increasing natural disasters, more is required from humankind. That burden is ours to bear. In recent months, unfortunately, my country was not spared wildfires and floods either, which reached unprecedented dimensions. Those increasingly worrying warnings are a call to action, without delay. Croatia has already demonstrated its dedication to global efforts to preserve the environment by ratifying the Paris Agreement. Two days ago I expressed our principled support to the new French initiative — the Global Pact for the Environment — aimed at better coordinating global action against climate change.

In the context of sustainable development, synergies among global, national and local policies need to be strengthened. We believe that next year's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will offer a platform to discuss efficient measures for a true transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies, such as the pivotal goal of making cities and human settlements inclusive and safe, while granting their inhabitants a proper quality of life.

Croatia's commitment to multilateralism is unwavering. We believe in the United Nations system and our joint potential to promote effective, inclusive and sustainable global governance based on the rules and principles of international law. It is with that aspiration in mind that Croatia joined the United Nations 25 years ago. A quarter of a century later, I stand before the Assembly with the same noble ambitions and responsibility for respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and economic betterment, for solidarity with humans living in precarious conditions and for common issues concerning our planet. Only with joint vigour to that end can we advance and materialize our professed common goals and values. It is incumbent upon us to do so, and the time is now.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Croatia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Trudeau (Canada): Before I begin, in the light of Tuesday's earthquake in Mexico, I would like to offer Canada's condolences to all families and friends in mourning. We wish a speedy recovery for all those who were injured and thank all first responders for their tireless efforts to help keep people safe. Our thoughts are also with our friends in the Caribbean, who continue to suffer from devastating hurricanes. The generosity and resilience that millions have shown in the face of those natural disasters is an inspiration to the world. Canada stands ready to lend a helping hand whenever we can.

It is an honour to be back here at the General Assembly today and to have an opportunity to speak to this year's theme, namely, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet".

(*spoke in French*)

People. Peace. A good quality of life and an environment that we take care of. Equality for all, no matter where. That is what counts in the eyes of Canadians. Throughout our history, we have worked tirelessly to realize our ambitions both at home and elsewhere in the world. Today I would like to speak about the difficult lessons that Canada has learned along the way. Canada is not a wonderland where the difficulties experienced by others do not exist. We face the same challenges. Canada is continually evolving.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada remains a work in progress. I want to tell the Assembly about the Canadian experience because, for all the mistakes we have made, we remain hopeful — hopeful that we can do better, and be better, and treat each other with the dignity and the respect that is the birthright of every human being. I want to tell the Assembly our story because I know that the challenges we have faced, and continue to face, are not unique in the world, nor are the solutions. An approach that values human dignity and emphasizes fairness and real opportunity for everyone has a home in Canada and in every country. It is an approach that does not just serve domestic needs but makes the world a better, more peaceful, more prosperous place for all.

Mr. Llorenty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

This year Canada celebrates the 150th anniversary of out Confederation. But Canada is much older than that. It has been home to the descendants of settlers and immigrants for hundreds of years, and indigenous peoples for millenniums. We are a country that is built on different cultures, different religions and different languages all coming together. Such diversity has become our great strength.

But that is not, and has not always been, true for everyone who shares our land. Canada is built on the ancestral land of indigenous peoples, but, regrettably, it is also a country that came into being without the meaningful participation of those who were there first. Even treaties that were developed to provide a foundation for proper relations have not been fully honoured or implemented. For First Nations, Métis Nation and Inuit peoples in Canada, those early colonial relationships were not about strength through diversity or a celebration of our differences. For indigenous peoples in Canada, their experience was mostly one of humiliation, neglect and abuse.

(*spoke in French*)

They were victims of a Government that did not respect them; their traditions, their assets, their way of governing or their laws. It chose to deny and undermine their rights and their dignity. They were victims of a Government that sought to rewrite their unique history and eradicate their languages and cultures by imposing colonial traditions and their own way of life. They were victims of a Government that refused to protect their lands and waters and that rejected their principle of always thinking seven generations ahead.

In short, we rejected the very idea of entire generations of indigenous peoples defining their own lives with the dignity and pride they are due. We have deprived Canada of the significant contributions that those generations could have made to the progression of our great country. The inability of successive Canadian Governments to respect the rights of indigenous

peoples in Canada causes us great shame. For too many indigenous peoples, that lack of respect for their rights persists today.

(*spoke in English*)

Today there are still children living on reserves in Canada who cannot safely drink, bathe in or even play in the water that comes out of their taps. There are indigenous parents who say goodnight to their children and have to cross their fingers in the hope that their kids will not run away or take their own lives in the night. Young indigenous people in Canada struggle to get a good education. Although residential schools are thankfully a thing of the past, too many indigenous youth are still sent away, far from their families, just to get the basic education most Canadians take for granted. For far too many indigenous women, life in Canada includes threats of violence so frequent and severe that Amnesty International has called it a human rights crisis.

That is the legacy of colonialism in Canada, of a paternalistic Indian Act, of the forced relocation of Inuit and First Nations communities and a systematic denial of Métis rights and history, of residential schools that separated children as young as 5 years old from their families, punished them for speaking their own language and sought to extinguish indigenous cultures entirely.

The good news is that Canadians get it. They see the inequities, and they are fed up with the excuses. And that impatience gives us a rare and precious opportunity to act. We now have before us an opportunity to deliver true, meaningful and lasting reconciliation between Canada and First Nations, the Métis Nation, and Inuit peoples.

(*spoke in French*)

At a time where we seek to reconcile, we should be guided by the basic standards adopted in this Hall 10 years ago this month. I know that in the past Canada's position on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was disappointing. We actively campaigned and voted against such rights, only to finally accept them reluctantly by saying that it was simply a document of aspirations. However, they are not aspirations. The Declaration is very concrete for indigenous peoples and for those who who worked long and hard to make that document a reality.

(*spoke in English*)

In the words of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the Declaration provides the necessary principles, norms and standards for reconciliation to flourish in twenty-first-century Canada. That is not an aspiration, that is a way forward. Last year, at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Canada's then Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs finally corrected Canada's position on the Declaration, and announced that we are now, without qualification, a full supporter of the Declaration.

In partnership with indigenous peoples, we are moving ahead with a thorough review of federal laws, policies and operational practices to get our house in order and make sure that our Government is meeting its obligations, including international obligations under the Declaration. We know that the world expects Canada to strictly adhere to international human rights standards — including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples — and that *is* what we expect of ourselves too.

We are working closely with indigenous peoples in Canada to better respond to their priorities, to better understand how they see and define self-determination and to support their work of nation rebuilding. Along with indigenous partners, we are co-developing programmes to ensure the preservation, protection and revitalization of Métis, Inuit and First Nations languages. In short, we have been working hard, in partnership with other orders of Government and with indigenous leaders in Canada, to correct past injustices and to bring about a better quality of life for indigenous peoples in Canada.

I will give a few examples. Many will sound familiar because they are closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — goals that apply to all of our countries without exception. Our efforts include investments to help bring safe and clean drinking water to all indigenous communities, part of Sustainable Development Goal 6, on clean water and sanitation. So far, more than two dozen long-term drinking-water advisories in indigenous communities have been eliminated, and we have a plan to bring to an end those that remain.

(*spoke in French*)

Those efforts take the form of new investments to eliminate gaps in the education of First Nations. The new agreements recognize the power and authority of First Nations. They also consider ways to create and manage educational systems that are managed within the communities, by the communities and for the communities. Those important notions are in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4, on quality education.

For many indigenous peoples in Canada, among other things, those investments will enable laying the foundation for reaching Sustainable Development Goal 8, on decent work and economic growth. We know that no one can hope to have a true and equal chance of succeeding without good health, a solid community, a well-paid quality job, quality education and safe and affordable housing. Of course, that also applies to indigenous peoples.

(*spoke in English*)

That is why our efforts include working with indigenous communities to help build and refurbish homes. Construction work on nearly 4,000 homes has been completed or is under way, helping to fulfil SDG 11, on making communities safe and sustainable places to live. And across the country, we are also working on a national housing strategy to give more Canadians access to housing that is safe, affordable and adequate.

Our efforts also include a sharper focus on indigenous communities across Canada and around the world as it relates to SDG 5, on combating gender-based violence and giving women and girls equal opportunities to succeed. We need women and girls to succeed because that is how we grow stronger economies and build stronger communities. That is why our Government will be moving forward shortly with legislation to ensure equal pay for work of equal value.

The Sustainable Development Goals are as meaningful in Canada as they are everywhere else in the world. We are committed to implementing them at home, while we also work with our international partners to achieve them around the world. That is important, because poverty and hunger know no borders. We cannot pretend that those solvable challenges happen only on distant shores. The need for greater equality and decent work are real and persistent human needs — ones we cannot afford to ignore, especially in our own countries.

(*spoke in French*)

It is up to each of us to ensure that all of us, including indigenous peoples, have better opportunities. It is our responsibility to ensure that true equality is unconditional. Equality applies to us all, regardless of our gender, origin, beliefs or the person we choose to love. It is our responsibility to take better care of the environment that we all share. As I said here at the signing ceremony of the Paris Agreement, we are all implicated, in all senses of the word. We are all responsible, and our new ways of doing things must take that into account.

(*spoke in English*)

In Canada that means new relationships between the Government of Canada and indigenous peoples — relationships based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership. We recently made changes to our Government structures to help with the transition to those new relationships with indigenous peoples. We are dismantling the old colonial bureaucratic structures and creating a new Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, led by Carolyn Bennett, an experienced and effective advocate for indigenous peoples in Canada. In her new role, she will lead our Government's efforts to better support indigenous peoples as they strengthen their distinct political, cultural, legal and economic institutions and assume autonomy over their own affairs, including the recognition and implementation of self-government as an expression of self-determination.

At the same time, we recognize that in Canada the federal Government has a historic responsibility for providing services to indigenous peoples and an ongoing role to play. To better do that work while at the same time supporting indigenous self-determination, in consultation with indigenous peoples, we will create a new Department of Indigenous Services, led by our former Minister of Health, Jane Philpott. Over time, programmes and services will increasingly be delivered by indigenous peoples, as part of their move towards true self-government and the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

(*spoke in French*)

We believe that this separation is the best way for Canada to meet its sustainable development commitments, while following the principle of self-

determination, which is at the heart of the Declaration. We are in uncharted territory. No one has paved the way for us, but we cannot wait. The time has come to take our own journey together. The time has come to think outside the box, to move away from the limits imposed by old outdated colonial structures and to make room for innovation and structures that respect the inherent rights of indigenous peoples to govern themselves and to determine their own future.

(*spoke in English*)

For the federal Government, that means making changes to how we operate. The departmental change I mentioned is part of fulfilling that responsibility. For indigenous peoples, it means taking a hard look at how they define and govern themselves as nations and Governments, and how they seek to relate to other orders of Government. Indigenous peoples will decide how they wish to represent and organize themselves. Some may choose to engage with our Government based on historic nations and treaties, others will use different shared experiences as the basis for coming together. The choice is theirs. That is precisely what self-determination demands.

Although that path is uncharted, I am confident that we will reach a place of reconciliation, that we will reach a place as a country where nation-to-nation, Government-to-Government and Inuit-Crown relationships can be transformed — a place where the standards enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are fully realized not merely by Government mandate, but in true partnership with indigenous peoples.

Part of that new partnership will involve addressing the shared challenge of climate change. Indigenous and northern communities are particularly affected by its stark reality. In communities across the north — places like Paulatuk, Kugluktuk, and Tuktoyaktuk — community members are finding sea ice conditions more dangerous and unpredictable for travelling and hunting in the winter. In Canada's western Arctic, the permafrost is melting and huge pieces of tundra are eroding into the ocean. Around Baffin Island, Inuit elders are finding it difficult to forecast the weather like they used to, so difficult that many are now reluctant to even try.

At home, we are working hard to help those communities adapt and prepare for the future. At the international level, our commitment is unwavering. There is no country on the planet that can walk away from the challenge and reality of climate change. For our part, Canada will continue to fight for the global plan that has a realistic chance of countering it. We have a responsibility to future generations, and we will uphold it.

We have a chance to build in Canada and around the world economies that are clean, that are growing, that are forward-looking. We will not let that opportunity pass us by.

(*spoke in French*)

In Canada that means imposing a tariff on carbon-related pollution. When that is done properly, it is the most effective way of reducing emissions while continuing to grow the economy. It also means continuing to work with other countries to bring us closer to the goals we have set for ourselves. Last week in Montreal, we welcomed environment leaders from over 30 countries to participate in a working meeting. It was an opportunity for us to discuss the various ways of implementing the Paris Agreement and to maintain the international momentum towards a more sustainable future for all.

(*spoke in English*)

Likewise, the global community has a responsibility to do all that it can to reduce inequality within and among countries. In Canada we are working hard to achieve that goal. We improved child benefit payments. Our new programme gives nine out of 10 families more money to help with the high cost of raising their kids, and because of that we expect to reduce child poverty in Canada by 40 per cent. We raised taxes on the wealthiest 1 per cent so that we could lower them for the middle class, and we are continuing to look for ways to make our tax system more fair. Right now we have a system that encourages wealthy Canadians to use private corporations to pay a lower tax rate than middle-class Canadians. That is not fair, and we are going to fix it.

(*spoke in French*)

We are investing to make education more affordable and accessible so that every Canadian can get the training needed to find and keep a good, well-paying job. That is particularly important at a time when automation is challenging the traditional definition of work.

At the international level, we have reaffirmed Canada's commitment to reducing poverty and injustice, while also putting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the heart of our development efforts. We have adopted that approach because we know that supporting women and girls leads to economic growth, and that peace and cooperation can then take root. Families and communities can then hope for a better quality of life.

(*spoke in English*)

We are also working hard to deliver progressive trade agreements such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union, which comes into effect today. CETA will expand opportunities for businesses, create good, well-paying jobs for workers and deliver meaningful economic growth — the kind of growth that benefits all our citizens, not just the wealthiest. We have the opportunity — and I would argue that we have the responsibility — to ensure that trade agreements include strong provisions to safeguard workers' rights, to protect the environment and to ensure that the benefits of trade are felt more broadly. When we do that, we do not just grow our economies, we live up to our values. We say to ourselves and to one another that good enough just is not good enough, and that better is always possible.

(*spoke in French*)

It is always possible to do better when people are at the heart of the decisions we make. People, as the theme of this general debate reminds us, are the key to building a peaceful and prosperous future. It is a future that we all want for ourselves, for our children and for our grandchildren. It is a future in which indigenous people in Canada and around the world have the right to participate as equal partners. It is a future that we can build if we work together.

(*spoke in English*)

Our efforts to build a better relationship with indigenous peoples in Canada are not only about righting historical wrongs. They are about listening, learning and working together. They are also about concrete actions for the future. The reconciliation that we seek holds lessons for us all.

We cannot build strong relationships if we refuse to have conversations. We cannot chart a more peaceful path if the starting point is suspicion and mistrust. And we cannot build a better world unless we work together, respect our differences, protect the vulnerable and stand up for the things that matter most. As I said last year (see A/71/PV.8), I know that it will be hard work. But I remain confident — for Canada's experience shows it to be true — that any challenge can be met if we meet it together.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Canada for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Samoa warmly welcomes the assumption of Mr. Miroslav Lajčák to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, at a time when our Organization is going through unprecedentedly volatile and difficult times. We look forward to his leadership so that together we can chart a safer, more predictable and more humane pathway in our journey through life's uncharted waters. He can count on Samoa's support as we work in partnership to translate into tangible and measurable achievements the overarching theme of his tenure, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet".

The President's predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, demonstrated strong leadership during his successful presidency. We wish him well in his new calling.

Secretary-General Guterres is passionate about, and committed to, turning the United Nations into an efficient and effective Organization that is fit for purpose and readily responsive to the needs of the very peoples it was established to serve in the first place. In working to make the focus of the United Nations more people-centred than process-centred, Samoa assures the Secretary-General of its full support.

This week's annual general debate is the twentieth successive general debate of the General Assembly that I have attended and addressed. My continuous participation is a measure of my conviction and my Government's unqualified faith in the value of the United Nations and the endless potential that it holds to deal successfully with any issue of diversity and gravity that it confronts. The United Nations remains our choice of last resort and hope to provide the political will and the necessary commitment to address our challenges. That is why we want it to remain relevant and adaptable to changing circumstances. It must be able to respond effectively to the current and emerging challenges that our world faces.

We meet against the backdrop of a world plagued by uncertainty and a sense of ebbing hope. We are losing the fight to free our world from poverty and instability. Conflicts abound, and we are no longer distanced or disconnected from deadly acts of terrorism and the devastation of natural and human-induced disasters. We are living in an environment of risk. Climate change is an existential threat. Allow me to pause and offer our sincere condolences to the Governments and the peoples of all the countries that have suffered from the recent devastation of hurricanes and earthquakes.

We cannot help but watch with trepidation and uneasiness the global dynamics that are nudging our world perilously close to a potential catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. As small island Pacific countries, we are no longer protected by our isolation. We are bystanders, but we have the most to lose in the unfolding power drama being played out on the Korean peninsula. We pray for visionary leadership with sound moral judgment on both sides in order to ensure that we give peace a chance.

That explains why I signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons yesterday on Samoa's behalf. As a signatory to that historic Treaty, we wanted to demonstrate unequivocally our aspiration for a world without nuclear weapons. The conventional narrative that the possession of nuclear weapons will act as deterrent to make the world a safer place to live has not been borne out by the current realities. Otherwise, the developments on the Korean peninsula would not have happened at all. We firmly believe that possessing nuclear weapons and adding new nuclear Powers only make our world less safe, less secure and less peaceful, hence the need to rid our world completely of all nuclear weapons.

No matter how noble a goal lies behind having such arsenals, allowing them to fall into the wrong and unprincipled hands is a recipe for doom and mayhem, because people, after all, are human and mere mortals. But all is not yet lost. The adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which offers a united approach to addressing the plight of the world's displaced peoples, the creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which is aimed at enhancing the Organization's capability to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and the historic, first-ever Treaty banning nuclear weapons are all positive developments moving forward.

Like other global challenges, climate change transcends borders without leaving a trace. It has no respect for sovereignty and does not discriminate between rich and poor countries. Its dire consequences are real, including for those who remain in denial. Climate change is a perpetual priority issue for my country and our Pacific region. In our small islands, as we witnessed recently, natural catastrophes can decimate an entire country, bringing with them great pain and upheaval to peoples' lives, as well as set back the national economy for years. We know that from repeated past experience. Our islands' limited resources and lack of adaptive capacity make the burden of rehabilitation a mammoth undertaking. While we applaud the resilience of our people to bounce back from major natural disasters, the scars of those natural phenomena take years to heal and recover from. If it is any consolation to our island States, even some of the well-resourced developed countries continue to try to recover from and overcome the impact of catastrophes that devastated their economies.

Samoa remains committed to ongoing efforts to pursue respect for human rights and the rule of law, and does its part to contribute to that global effort. For the first time ever, at Samoa's invitation, a United Nations human rights expert group visited last month to carry out a fact-finding mission to assess the progress made towards eliminating discrimination against women and towards protecting and promoting women's rights in the country. Samoa is the first Pacific country to open its doors to that independent mechanism.

We continue to place great faith in the rule of law and the vital protection it offers to all States, especially to weak and small countries like mine without any armed forces or affiliation to any military grouping. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an important part of the architecture of world peace based on the rule of law. We call for the early activation of the Kampala Amendments. The ICC was represented at the Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders' Retreat held earlier this month in Samoa.

Terrorism is an offence to humankind and runs contrary to the core values of the United Nations. For Samoa, I reaffirm our strong support for the relevant Security Council resolutions against terrorism, which send a clear signal of our determination to suppress terrorist activities, including training, international recruiting and financing. Samoa continues to align its domestic policies and legislation to meeting its international obligations to help combat terrorism, as well as to participate actively in Pacific regional security initiatives.

In the context of peacekeeping, Samoa's unwavering support for United Nations peacekeeping work is underscored by 17 years of uninterrupted police deployment serving in missions in Liberia, the Sudan, Timor-Leste and South Sudan. Although we are a small country, Samoan police officers continue to serve side by side with officers from other countries in places that require the intervention of the United Nations. Our commitment is rooted in our firm belief in the role that United Nations peacekeeping plays in helping eliminate the causes of conflict and in bringing about peace and stability. We fully endorse the condemnation of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping, which is why we signed the international compact initiative of the Secretary-General to committing countries to eliminating those heinous acts in peacekeeping.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides our framework to put the world on a path towards a sustainable and resilient future for the people, the planet and prosperity. Although the 2030 Agenda remains a high priority on the global agenda and we see signs of momentum in terms of its implementation, much work remains to be done. The need to accelerate global action on, and awareness of, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains. The adoption of the Pacific regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific complements Samoa's road map based on an integrated approach involving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action, known as the Samoa Pathway, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, which are aligned with our national development strategy.

For small island developing States, the Samoa Pathway is their sustainable development road map, which highlights their key tasks and priorities, and is closely linked to the 2030 Agenda. As we approach the five-year review of the Samoa Pathway in 2019, it is important to ensure that the comprehensive review of United Nations support for SIDS is properly addressed and implemented. We need to study closely lessons learned from the partnerships registered for SIDS and encourage proactive follow-up, as well as pursue new partnerships for the group's sustainable development.

Since the last annual global multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogue, several partnerships and voluntary commitments specific to small island developing States were launched during the Ocean Conference. Prior to the mid-term review of the SIDS outcome document, it is important that we look at ways of improving implementation and addressing gaps and emerging issues. The success of the Ocean Conference was crucial to building momentum in the implementation of the SDGs, given that the ocean is the lifeblood of the planet. Addressing the targets of SDG 14 for SIDS is catalytic to implementing several, if not all, of the 17 Goals.

With the new Blue Pacific concept for the Pacific region, and the concrete outcomes from the Conference, emphasis will be placed on implementation. At the Ocean Conference, Samoa pledged 13 voluntary commitments that showcased national efforts aimed at the conservation, management and sustainable use

of the ocean and its resources and the engagement of communities.

During the Ocean Conference in June, I was appointed the Special Ambassador of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development by the United Nations World Tourism Organization. The year 2017 is a crucial one for sustainable tourism. Given the reliance of many of our small economies on tourism and the role it can play in SDG implementation, we will continue to promote the role of tourism in support of peaceful societies and sustainable development.

Let me now turn to the regional context and share with the Assembly some of the decisions taken by the leaders of our Pacific Islands Forum at their forty-eighth Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, which my country was privileged to host at the beginning of the month. For our year-long chairmanship we chose the theme "The Blue Pacific. Our sea of islands — Our security through sustainable development, management and conservation".

We in Samoa reaffirmed the Framework for Pacific Regionalism to drive our region's policy agenda towards the realization of our vision, that of a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, so as to enable all Pacific people to lead free, healthy and productive lives.

We also endorsed the Blue Pacific identity as the core driver of collective action for advancing the leaders' vision under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. This new narrative calls for inspired leadership and a long-term Pacific Islands Forum foreign policy commitment to act as one for the good of all rather than a few. The Blue Pacific identity reinforces the potential of our shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean, based on the explicit recognition of our shared ocean identity, ocean geography and ocean resources. It aims to strengthen collective action by putting the Blue Pacific at the centre of regional policymaking and united action for advancing the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' vision for the region.

We discussed the key priorities for our region with other Pacific leaders, a few of which I will highlight, as their implementation requires collective and urgent action from this gathering of the United Nations.

First, climate change remains a priority challenge for the Pacific region because of its existential nature and its security implications. Climate change is already happening; it cannot be washed away by the rising tides. It has significant security implications. Its impact threatens the continued existence and viability as sovereign States of some of our low-lying atolls. Even countries that have been in self-denial with regard to the phenomenon of climate change, must surely now accept the weight of scientific evidence.

The implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is of high priority and requires collective action to address this existential threat. We are confident that Fiji's presidency of the twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will focus the spotlight on challenges and the need for genuine partnerships to help us deliver on our nationally determined contributions as part of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The Pacific has also endorsed its Framework for Resilience Development in the Pacific: An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management and its institutional arrangements to support the elaboration and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Secondly, the ocean and its resources continue to be critical to the livelihoods of our people and the region. The impacts of climate change, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and overfishing are threatening the sustainability of this crucial resource of our region. The Pacific Forum members will continue to be actively engaged on all ocean-related issues at the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, including the biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction process.

Thirdly, we adopted the Pacific Road Map for Sustainable Development and its implementation strategy. That reflects the seriousness our region places on implementing the 17 SDGs and the importance of a regional approach to meeting those international commitments. We continue to count on the important role of the United Nations and our partners to support regional and national efforts for SDG implementation, particularly the building of our capabilities. We look forward to the Secretary-General's reform and how the Forum can engage to ensure its priorities in terms of its SDG road map and the implementation of the Samoa Pathway, the Paris Agreement and other regional needs are considered in the reform.

Finally, in the context of security, the Pacific Islands Forum remains committed to collective arrangements and mechanisms to assist regional Governments

recover from national conflicts and crises. The success of thse arrangements, together with the support of the United Nations, is already evident in the positive results of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). I am honoured to acknowledge the successful conclusion of the Mission, which brought together peacekeepers from all member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Leaders acknowledged the successful conclusion of RAMSI and recognized it as a success story of regionalism and a workable example of regional cooperation and diplomacy, embodying more than a decade of partnership and cooperation among the Forum member countries. They agreed to build on the Biketawa Declaration and other Forum security-related declarations to expand the concept of security, including human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritizing environmental security and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change.

Over the years, the Pacific has continued to call for advancing the cause of nuclear non-proliferation. Issues such as radioactive contaminants in the Republic of the Marshall Islands are of great concern to both that country and the region. We count on the promised support of the relevant United Nations entities to respond accordingly to requests for assistance, including working closely with the regional technical agencies. The United States of America is also encouraged to take urgent action to address the issue.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Cerar (Slovenia): At the outset, I would like to express our sympathies to Mexico and its people as they grapple with the effects of the earthquake that has resulted in so many tragic victims and ruined homes.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish him every success in discharging his duties. He can count on Slovenia's full support. I would also like to to express my gratitude to the outgoing President, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his important contribution to the work of the General Assembly over the past year. Lastly, I would also like to congratulate Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as Secretary-General. I commend his determination to promote the United Nations and its values and goals, and his tireless efforts to strengthen the Organization.

The world continues to deal with challenges to international peace and security that are ever more complex and intertwined. Shocking images of human suffering are a daily reality, the consequences of the armed conflicts, environmental degradation, famine, lack of economic opportunity, grave breaches of human rights and terrorism that are just some of those global challenges. If we are to address them, effective international cooperation, with the United Nations at its core, is essential. We have the mandate and the responsibility to act. We must stand united to address global challenges together. Despite those threats, I am encouraged by a new dynamic in the United Nations and the strong push by the Secretary-General to strengthen multilateralism and the reform agenda. I commend his determination to make the Organization stronger and more fit to serve as the bedrock of the international rules-based order. More than ever, we need a strong United Nations to be one of our key actors in providing security, stability and a life of dignity for all.

Two years ago, we achieved a milestone by agreeing on our development road map. Together, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Change Agreement provide a framework and vision for a more sustainable planet in the future and prosperity for all. The true test now is their implementation. This is not the time to go back on our promises. Rather, we

need to turn them into real progress that will benefit people around the globe. Slovenia has embarked on that path with a sense of urgency. That is demonstrated, among other things, by Slovenia's high ranking in the *SDG Index and Dashboards 2017 Report*, which shows that we are in the top 10 of 157 measured countries in our achievements towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are strongly engaged in protecting the environment and ensuring its sustainability, and we are determined to raise awareness about the key factors shaping our sustainable future. For example, we recognize the key role that bees and other pollinators play in preventing hunger, ensuring food security, improving human health and preserving the environment and its biodiversity. In that context, we are proposing that the General Assembly declare 20 May an international day of bees and proclaim it World Bee Day. I would like to thank all of the States that have already expressed support for the initiative and encourage others to do so.

Achieving sustainable development is only possible if the global community works together in a solid partnership between Governments, international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. The same is true for dealing with large global migrations and refugee flows. Shared responsibility and solidarity should be the guiding principles of our global approach. In that spirit, Slovenia is constructively engaged in the consultation process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees. We believe that the adoption in 2018 of both global compacts will be another major milestone in our path towards ensuring a life of dignity for all.

Without respect for human rights, there can be no peace, freedom, security or development. The United Nations has been instrumental in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide. However, let us not forget that the primary responsibility for the fulfilment of human rights lies with States. Slovenia, as a current member of the Human Rights Council, is a strong supporter of human rights. In that spirit, we continue to advocate a progressive approach to human rights issues, enhancing protection norms and standards at all levels. Our main focus is on the rights of children, support for gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the rights of the elderly. In that context, we also focus on the importance of intergenerational collaboration.

There is still much to be done before we can ensure a life of dignity for all without discrimination. More must also be done to mitigate harm to civilians, especially in the context of armed conflicts, and to prevent all forms of sexual violence. It is particularly despicable when people deployed to protect civilians engage in abuse. We therefore underline the need for a zero-tolerance policy on all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Respect for international treaties, the decisions of international courts and tribunals and other sources of international law, as well as the abili*y to implement them, is indispensable to a functioning global community. Respect for the obligations arising from treaties and for other sources of international law is also embedded in the Charter of the United Nations, and is the very foundation of international peace and security. Moreover, it is an important guarantor of friendly relations and cooperation among States. Slovenia recognizes the essential role of the rule of law and international law and has therefore made it central to its foreign policy.

In the context of the rule of law, ending impunity for the most serious international crimes continues to be an important goal for my Government. Slovenia is committed to promoting international criminal justice, especially as it is represented by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The principles enshrined in the Charter attest to the natural partnership between the United Nations and the Court, and that relationship is expected to advance even further with the activation of the ICC's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, which is anticipated by the end of the year. We express our strong support for swift activation of the Kampala amendments on the crime of aggression. Needless to say, the primary responsibility to prosecute atrocity crimes still rests with States. Slovenia, together with other leading States, will continue to actively pursue the improvement of the international legal framework for mutual legal assistance and extradition for domestic prosecution of the most serious international crimes.

Years of horrific war in Syria, conflicts in Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Libya and Mali and dire situations such as those in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name just a few, remain particular sources of concern. We call on all relevant parties to refrain from the use of force and

engage in political dialogue. Violent extremism and the crimes committed by terrorist groups continue to plague the world. We must do all we can to prevent and stop such crimes, particularly by providing viable alternative opportunities for young people.

The United Nations plays a key role in countering terrorism, including the prevention of violent extremism. In that regard, Slovenia welcomed the reform of the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture, as well as resolution 71/291, designed to strengthen the ability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

As a strong supporter of non-proliferation and disarmament in the area of weapons of mass destruction, Slovenia is committed to treaty-based nuclear disarmament and arms control. We firmly believe that we must work progressively to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons through full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In that regard, we strongly condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's violations of Security Council resolutions and its own international commitments. They pose a serious threat to peace and security in the region and beyond. We must intensify our efforts to sustain peace everywhere, but most immediately in a wide range of fragile and conflict-affected States. Conflicts cannot be prevented or resolved by addressing the symptoms alone; we must address the underlying causes. For that we have to think long term. The United Nations can help to defuse latent conflicts. Whenever possible, we should opt for diplomacy, mediation and conflict prevention.

The emphasis must be on doing more in a collective, timely and effective manner. That can be achieved only by a strong, robust, adaptable, knowledgeable and responsible United Nations, which is why Slovenia strongly supports the Secretary-General's reform efforts. The various parts of the United Nations system must be better coordinated. Duplication must be avoided, and the common goal must be getting tangible results. I would like to conclude by assuring the Assembly that Slovenia is committed to supporting the United Nations and is determined to work with all partners to deliver tangible, meaningful results that will advance peace, security, development and human rights for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Miroslav Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sigmar Gabriel, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Gabriel (Germany) (*spoke in German; interpretation provided by the delegation*): We seem to be going through a phase in which we are confronted with hurricanes and earthquakes, both political and natural, upheavals that are getting harsher and more intransigent and belligerent from day to day and from speech to speech. As responsible politicians, it is vital that we ask ourselves how we can bring about a change in direction that will lead to more peace and stability, less hunger and better prospects for everyone in the world.

How do we ensure that globalization will ultimately deliver justice for all rather than riches to the few? One answer as to how we can achieve that change in direction can be found in a report addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It states that we must not limit ourselves to the "traditional questions of peace and war" but must also work to overcome "world hunger, mass misery and alarming disparities between the living conditions of rich and poor". I find the analysis very apt. The painful thing about that excerpt is that it comes not from a recent report to the Secretary-General but from one that goes back nearly 40 years. Its apt analysis of the global situation can be found in *North-South: A Program for Survival*, commissioned almost 40 years ago to the day, the report of the North-South Commission, which began its work in 1977. The Chairman of the Commission was former German Chancellor Willy Brandt.

Humankind is still dealing with more or less the same structural difficulties today, but it seems to have become rather more difficult to change the world for the better. Looking around the globe today, it seems that a world view that puts one's own national interests first and which refuses to engage in a balancing of interests among the nations of the world is gaining ever more ground. National egotism, I believe, is worthless as an organizing principle for our world of the twenty-

first century. Such egotism sees the world as an arena, a battleground in which everyone is fighting against everyone else and in which everyone has to assert his or her own interests, either alone or in alliances of convenience. In this world view, it is the law of the strongest that prevails, not the strength of international law. I firmly believe that we have to rise up against this world view. We need more international cooperation and less national egotism, not the other way around.

Some 40 years ago, the North-South Commission recognized that global problems cannot be resolved through confrontation but only through often arduous efforts to compromise and identify common interests. Ultimately, no country can win if it strives only to assert its own interests. If we all did that, looking out only for our own national interests, confrontations and conflicts would increase and global prosperity would falter. The motto "Our country first" would not only lead to more national confrontations and less prosperity; in the end, we would all be the losers. As Germans, our historical experience is quite unusual. Only after two terrible world wars did we learn to see our former enemies as neighbours and partners with whom we wanted to share and shoulder responsibility for a peaceful coexistence. Only since then have our own citizens in Germany had a better life. We have learned that it was not "Germany first" that made our country strong and prosperous; rather, it was "European and international responsibility first" that gave us Germans peace and prosperity.

In international cooperation, no one loses sovereignty. Rather, we all gain a new sovereignty together that we cannot possess as nation States on our own in today's world. That is why the European Union today provides the framework for our German policies. The road has often been rocky and arduous, for nothing is more difficult than turning former enemies into friends. Often the way is not popular, and one needs considerable political courage to take it. Indeed, the call for international cooperation and for efforts to balance interests is not always popular in our own countries. However, that courage finally led to peace and prosperity in Europe after centuries of war. Today we Germans are grateful to the courageous people in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and many other countries of Europe for having the courage to befriend us — their former enemies — as new and lasting partners after the Second World War. It is precisely because of that experience in Germany and Europe that we support the work of strong, functioning collective institutions, above all the United Nations.

The urgent need for us to work together to establish a safer world has been vividly demonstrated by North Korea's current irresponsible actions, which pose a serious threat to world peace. We must send a clear message that the international community will not accept its nuclear provocations. Germany welcomes the sanctions adopted by the Security Council and calls for their speedy implementation in Europe, and we also support European initiatives calling for additional measures. At the same time, we should use all the diplomatic means at our disposal, first to defuse the situation and then to find a starting point for long-term solutions. Resolving this international crisis is crucial because if we do not, others will be encouraged to emulate North Korea. If a country can build up a nuclear arsenal while the international community stands helplessly by, other political leaders and countries will follow its example. That would bring about new nuclear crises emerging all over the world, and our children and grandchildren would grow up in a very dangerous world. That is why North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons is neither a bilateral nor a regional problem, but rather a global challenge that we have to overcome together.

We cannot accept the possibility that efforts to build a nuclear arsenal can be rewarded on the international stage. It is therefore more important than ever that the international architecture for arms control and disarmament does not crumble. Existing treaties and agreements must not be called into question. That applies in particular to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for Iran's nuclear programme. The Plan is a way out of the impasse of a nuclear confrontation that would jeopardize security in the region and have an impact far beyond it. However, we can reach the level of confidence that we so urgently need only if all obligations are rigorously met and the transparency we have agreed on is established. Germany will work within the E3+3 framework to ensure that the JCPOA is strictly implemented and upheld. That is not just about Iran; it is about the credibility of the entire international community. For what State would renounce the development of its own nuclear programme if it were shown that negotiated agreements did not last and that a binding agreement with the international community was not worth the paper it was written on? How can we convince countries such as North Korea that

international agreements make them more secure and will therefore encourage them to commit to further disarmament efforts if the agreement with Iran, the sole international example of such an endeavour, is not upheld?

What the world needs most urgently now is renewed trust. With particular regard to the implementation of the ban on the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we have a request for the United States, Russia, China and every country possessing nuclear weapons. They will be instrumental to ensuring the implementation of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and of arms control and disarmament. To that end, trust among them must be restored.

Statements by Presidents of the United States are always important and interesting, and always worth listening to and even reading after they have been delivered. I found a passage in one such statement that I especially liked. In it, the President of the United States of America called for general and complete disarmament. Every year, he said, billions of dollars were spent on weapons that were acquired for the purpose of making sure we never need to use them. That, he went on to say, was clearly not the most efficient means of ensuring peace. I have to admit that the statement dates back even further than the report of the North-South Commission. It was delivered by John F. Kennedy in 1963. We can see that everything that we need for a safer future has already been considered, written and said. I believe that today we should focus on the bold visions of the North-South Commission and President Kennedy, and have the courage to come up with new proposals for disarmament, arms control and confidence-building.

One of our tasks is to resolve emerging crises early on. A recent example is the escalating violence against the Rohingya people and the resulting refugee flows in the region. We should act as quickly as possible on the issue to offer both political and humanitarian support for alleviating the suffering and ending the conflict. Germany will again increase its aid to the Rohingya through the International Red Cross. We are committed to providing political and humanitarian support, as well as to practical peacebuilding, in many crisis regions around the world. And while military engagement under United Nations auspices is also sometimes necessary, we must ensure that we do not create any imbalances in that regard.

To bring up the North-South Commission again, its report included the impressive finding that, at the time it appeared, a half-day of the world's military expenditure would have sufficed to finance the entire malaria eradication programme. I suspect that today we would not even need that much. The world's current annual spending on weapons is just under $1.7 trillion. To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1 and thereby eradicate extreme poverty in the world by 2030, we would need only 10 per cent of that. Sustainable Development Goal 4, on education, would require even less per year. With that in mind, Germany has tripled its funding for civilian peacebuilding measures in the past few years.

Thankfully, progress has been made in some areas, for example in Iraq. We must work fast to consolidate the successes achieved there in combating the so-called Islamic State by initiating reconstruction and stabilization measures in the cities and regions that have been liberated. Germany has therefore decided to make an additional €250 million available for the reconstruction of Mosul. We cannot abandon the victims of the thugs of the Islamic State. We must help them return to their country. It is also important to strengthen a democratic and inclusive Iraqi State and ensure that the actions of an individual region do not leave it exposed to a relapse into destabilization or civil war. We can only ask the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq not to trigger any new conflicts, which are the very last thing that the country needs.

We also have to make progress in the Ukraine conflict. The Minsk agreements, which Germany played a key role in drafting, provide a clear road map for peace, based on the principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the inviolability of borders. If proposals are now put forward for deploying a United Nations peacekeeping mission involving Blue Helmets, I think we should pursue that idea resolutely. While there is certainly not yet sufficient consensus on what such a mission should look like, the idea is worth testing if it can help achieve a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the conflict zone. We would like to ask the Secretary-General to press for the proposal to be realized.

The North-South Commission pointed out that focusing solely on questions of war and peace was not enough. Those issues are also inextricably linked to the fair distribution of resources and to economic and social development and respect for universal human

rights. Only a world in which solidarity prevails will ultimately bring us security and stability. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development shows that the international community sees that as a common interest. If we want to make a reality of major ambitions such as peace, security and justice, we need stronger joint international institutions, and especially a stronger United Nations.

The founders of the United Nations were not naive. They had experienced the horrors of the first half of the twentieth century. For that very reason, they bequeathed to us the Charter of the United Nations, with its timeless principles and maxims. But while the principles of the United Nations are not outdated, the Organization has to adapt to the challenges of our times. We therefore support the Secretary-General's efforts to push ahead with bold reforms within the United Nations. He is setting the right priorities. The success of United Nations reform is largely up to us, the Member States. We have to work together to ensure that the United Nations is more efficient and has greater clout. In my view, reform efforts should not focus primarily on budget cuts. On the contrary, the United Nations will need more resources if it is to fulfil its mandate. We must therefore provide it with the means it needs to be successful. However, at present the figures tell a different story. The World Food Programme currently receives less than 50 per cent of the funding it needs to combat hunger crises around the world. Today a mere 15 per cent of contributions to the United Nations Development Programme are voluntary, non-tied payments, although in 2011 they were still at 50 per cent. The same is true for other United Nations aid programmes, and sometimes the outlook is even bleaker.

It should not be the job of those in positions of responsibility at the United Nations to spend more time sending begging letters seeking the necessary funding than in organizing effective assistance. We must change course and grant the United Nations more freedom with resources in exchange for greater transparency in its use of funds. Germany at any rate intends to maintain its financial support for the United Nations. As the country that is the fourth-largest provider of assessed contributions to the United Nations and that goes far beyond that, being one of the biggest donors of global humanitarian assistance generally, our input is substantial.

I believe that as Member States we should now take on another reform project that is long overdue. That is the composition of the Security Council, which should finally reflect the realities of the twenty-first-century world. Today many more States than at the time of the establishment of the United Nations, more than 70 years ago, are shouldering the responsibility for peace and security and are prepared to live up to that responsibility as Members of the Organization. Germany is ready and willing to take on additional responsibilities, which is why we are seeking a non-permanent seat on the Council for the 2019-2020 term. We have clear goals in mind. Peace and security, global justice and human rights are indivisibly linked. We are preparing for reform of the United Nations and its Security Council, and we intend to work in partnership with all countries of the United Nations in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, for we can resolve global problems only if we refrain from focusing solely on national interests and instead work to reach a fair and peaceful balance of interests among all nations. Yes, that is an arduous process. But we must muster the courage to go down that path. For as Willy Brandt, who headed the North-South Commission after he left office as Chancellor, once said, "We firmly believe that problems created by men can also be solved by men". Let us work on that together.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In December of last year, the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/190, on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, which clearly stipulated the inadmissibility of interference in the internal affairs of States and of coups d'état as a method of transferring power, and the importance of excluding from international relations certain States' efforts to exert unlawful pressure on others, including through the extraterritorial application of national jurisdictions. An overwhelming majority of Member States voted in favour of the resolution. The minority was chiefly represented by the very countries that, contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, are attempting to dominate world affairs and impose their own development models and values on other States and peoples, led by a one-sided logic that undermines international law.

But the world is not standing still. We were pleased that United States President Donald Trump

unequivocally stated from this rostrum the day before yesterday (see A/72/PV.3) that it is important to comply with the principles of sovereignty in international affairs and to lead by example rather than by imposing one's will on other nations, and that countries with different values, cultures and aspirations can not only coexist but can work side by side on a basis of mutual respect. I believe that we can all subscribe to those words, especially if United States foreign policy will in fact be conducted on that basis.

Russia has always abided by the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in the affairs of other States, the equality of peoples and mutual respect in its international dealings, and it will continue to uphold them. In the past quarter century, despite challenges, our country has taken on in good faith its share of the work of eliminating the legacy of the Cold War and has done much to strengthen trust and understanding in Europe, the Atlantic region and all over the world. However, that has not been reciprocated by our Western partners, intoxicated as they were by the illusion of the onset of the end of history, and who are still trying to adapt rudimentary institutions designed for an era of bloc-versus-bloc confrontation to today's realities. NATO wants to recreate the climate of the Cold War and refuses to implement the principle it solemnly declared in the 1990s — equal and indivisible security throughout the region of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The West has built its policies according to the principle of "he who is not with us is against us", and has proceeded with the heedless expansion of NATO eastwards, fomenting instability in post-Soviet geopolitics and inciting anti-Russian feeling. It is that policy that lies at the root of the protracted conflict in Ukraine. Despite the efforts of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, the authorities in Kyiv constantly come up with new ploys to interfere with the implementation of their commitments under the package of measures outlined in the Minsk agreements of 12 February 2015 and endorsed by the Security Council.

But even in those circumstances, Russia has been focused on constructive effort and on finding mutually acceptable ways to implement the Minsk agreements. In response to concerns that have been expressed about the current security situation, President Putin has launched an initiative to establish a United Nations mission to protect the OSCE observers in the Donbas region, and a corresponding draft resolution has been introduced in the Security Council. We believe Russia's proposal will help to facilitate a settlement of the internal crisis in Ukraine that resulted from the anti-constitutional coup led by ultra-radicals. We hope for constructive interaction on the issues with our European and United States partners, without zero-sum games.

Here at United Nations Headquarters, we should bear in mind how the United Nations began. The decisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal were a warning against forgetting the lessons of the Second World War and the disastrous consequences of attempts to take control of the world's destiny by trampling on the lawful interests of other nations and peoples. It is disgusting to use concerns about freedom of expression as a pretext for condoning radical movements that preach neo-Nazi ideology and support the glorification of Nazis and their associates. We need constant vigilance to maintain a secure shield against neo-Nazism, revanchism, extremism and xenophobia and strengthen international and intercultural harmony.

Inciting hatred and intolerance, terrorists, extremists and nationalists destroy and desecrate objects of historical, religious and cultural value. Civilized Europe tolerates the demolition of monuments to the liberators of the continent and heroes of the Second World War whose victory was the foundation for the United Nations. We think this issue should be a priority for immediate attention from the General Assembly and UNESCO with a view to establishing a legal framework to prevent such actions, and Russia intends to submit proposals for it. The continuing indifference to the shameful issue of statelessness that persists in Europe is also unacceptable, as is the suppression of minority languages, which is a gross violation of Council of Europe conventions.

History has shown us throughout the ages that arriving at lasting settlements to disputes is possible only through dialogue and finding a balance between the conflicting parties' core interests. Unfortunately, outright pressure is replacing diplomacy increasingly often in the arsenals of a number of Western countries. Imposing unilateral sanctions on top of those authorized by the Security Council is an illegitimate act that undermines the collective international effort. Today we have all been watching with alarm as the United States has imposed yet another set of restrictions — in fact, extraterritorial restrictions — on Iran, and threatening the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of

Action, which has become a key factor in international and regional stability. The United States embargo on Cuba, which has gone on for more than half a century, is a demonstration of the uselessness of policies involving unilateral sanctions, and almost every Member State has been calling for it to be lifted for decades. It is time to listen to them.

The spiralling confrontation around the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is unraveling dangerously. We firmly condemn Pyongyang's adventurist nuclear-missile manoeuvres, which violate Security Council resolutions. But whipping up military hysteria is not only a blind alley, it is a deadly one. It goes without saying that all Security Council resolutions must be implemented but, along with sanctions, they all include provisions on the importance of resuming talks. We must stop blocking those provisions. There is no alternative to the political and diplomatic route, based on a dialogue among all interested parties, for addressing the Korean peninsula's nuclear problem. We urge all responsible members of the international community to support the Russian-Chinese road map, as outlined by the Foreign Ministries of Russia and China in a joint statement on 4 July.

Incitement to disorder and threats of violent intervention in the cause of the democratization of Venezuela are unacceptable, as is any action aimed at undermining the legitimate Government of any country. In any internal conflict, the international community must encourage the parties to take the path of national reconciliation and compromise. Efforts to ignore the opinions of others and resort to decrees and ultimatums, or to use force to circumvent the Charter of United Nations, have never done any good. The explosion of international terrorism, the millions of refugees and unprecedented waves of illegal migration are to a large degree the result of the attempts of the past few years to achieve regime change, including through the armed interventions that have wreaked havoc and destruction in the Middle East and North Africa and have paved the way for terrorists in parts of the world where they had never appeared before.

Despite the fact that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is pulling back in Syria and Iraq, considerable additional effort will be needed to stabilize the region. We should recall that we are fighting Al-Nusra as well as ISIL, despite the fact that for some reason Al-Nusra is tolerated by United States coalition members. Recent developments in Syria have given grounds for cautious optimism. The sixth international meeting on Syria, held in Astana on 14 and 15 September, finalized the establishment of the four de-escalation zones, which had been agreed on with the participation of Russia, Iran, Turkey, the United States, Jordan and the United Nations, with the support of many other countries. The agreements create the conditions for further progress towards implementing Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) on the basis of direct dialogue between the Government and the opposition aimed at uniting their efforts to eliminate the terrorist epicentre as soon as possible and restoring peace and unity throughout the country, while resolving its acute humanitarian problems. The most urgent task is to increase the supplies of humanitarian aid and demining the liberated territories. We believe firmly that anyone who sincerely desires peace for Syria and its people should take part in this process under the leadership of the United Nations and without any preconditions. The incidents where chemical weapons have been used in the region are a separate issue. Every case should be investigated honestly and professionally, with no attempts to manipulate the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Finding solutions to humanitarian issues and reconciling conflicting parties are also relevant issues for other crises in the region, including the situations in Libya, Yemen and Iraq. In all of those situations, as with any conflict, Russia is pursuing a balanced policy and working with all parties without exception. With regard to issues in the Middle East and North Africa, we cannot put United Nations decisions on the Palestinian question and the Arab Peace Initiative on the backburner, much less consign them to oblivion. We believe that restoring Palestinian unity is crucial and welcome Egypt's efforts in that direction. Russia is ready to assist in every possible way with the resumption of direct talks between Israel and Palestine, and to cooperate with its partners in the Quartet and the Arab League of States for that purpose. As long as the Palestinian question goes unresolved, it will continue to be exploited by extremists, who are attracting ever more new recruits.

The never-ending bloody terrorist attacks around the world illustrate the illusory nature of efforts to create isolated safe havens. We can combat extremism and terrorism together, without double standards or hidden agendas, only based on the primary responsibility

of States, as envisaged in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We welcome the reform of United Nations counter-terrorism activities that the Secretary-General has initiated, which the General Assembly has endorsed. We see the appointment of a Russian to head the new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism as an acknowledgement of the role that Russia has played in combating this evil, and we thank everyone for their support.

Russia is committed to the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. Under the existing treaty regimes in the area of arms control and non-proliferation, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons should be the end result of a process of universal and total disarmament that continues to ensure equal and indivisible security. Attempts to outlaw nuclear weapons that ignore current realities and all the factors that can affect strategic stability serve only to make this common goal further off than ever and to undermine the consensus regimes of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We urge everyone to say no to the militarization of the information space. We must work to stop it becoming an arena for political and military confrontation and prevent the use of information and communications technologies as instruments for exerting pressure, inflicting economic damage and spreading terrorist and extremist propaganda. The United Nations should focus its efforts on formulating rules for responsible behaviour in the digital sphere that can meet the security interests of all States. Russia has drafted a universal convention on countering cybercrime, including hacking, and we hope to launch discussions on it during the current session.

It is clear that in future the world will continue to confront a whole range of new, long-term problems affecting our entire civilization. We have no right to waste our energy, time and efforts on geopolitical games. We need collective approaches, not unilateral ones. The process of shaping a polycentric world order is also a trend — a changing event that reflects the redistribution of the global balance of power and the increasing role that the cultural and civilizational identity of peoples plays in it. All of us, including those who are used to telling the world what to do, will have to adapt to it. It is in our common interests not to try to restrain this natural process. We will have to work to ensure that the world order becomes fair and democratic, just as the founding fathers of the United Nations envisioned. Globalization should unite rather than divide people, while taking account of the interests of all States without exception and contributing to a stable and secure future for all humankind. Without mutual trust, we cannot hope for the effective implementation of the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals or the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, or for solutions to global issues that are so crucial to developing countries, such as food security, demographics and health care.

The fundamental principles of international relations should include the recognition of political pluralism, freedom of choice and the rule of law. We must stop relying on military alliances and instead provide support and security guarantees to States that opt for neutrality. On the economic front, we must work to lower barriers to trade and investment and stop politicizing economic relations. The International Olympic Movement, and sports in general, should remain outside politics. First and foremost, we must foster in young people respect for the cultural and civilizational diversity of today's world. We invite everybody to the nineteenth World Festival of Youth and Students, which my country will host in Sochi less than a month from now. Another important event will take place in Russia at the same time, when St. Petersburg convenes the 137th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, at which the main topic for discussion will be "Promoting cultural pluralism and peace through interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue". Let us encourage dialogue among various cultures and religions and stop using historical events to foment hatred and fear.

A philosophy of coexistence, unity and harmonization of countries' different interests underlies President Vladimir Putin's proposal for a greater Eurasian partnership, open to all States of Asia and Europe, with the goal of creating an economic and humanitarian space based on the principle of the indivisibility of security. It goes without saying that equal rights for all, individuals and States, would be a universal requirement, as stated in the Charter of the United Nations. Those just and equitable principles form the foundation for the activities of various organizations in which Russia actively participates, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS group of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. We also continue to build relations

with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the African Union, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and other associations of Asian, African and Latin American countries. Through our joint efforts we have achieved a more balanced approach in the work of organizations such as the Group of 20, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

We believe in the vitality of this Organization and would like the Secretary-General to play an active role in facilitating the full realization of its potential based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, while respecting the prerogatives of its intergovernmental bodies. Peacekeeping reform in particular requires a carefully tailored approach, without abrupt shifts or abandoning decades of invaluable accumulated experience.

Two thousand years ago, the Roman philosopher Seneca wrote, "We are born to live together". The founding fathers of the United Nations understood that better than anyone. They believed — and enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations — that our God-given existence on a single planet should compel all of us to unite in order to prevent the scourge of new wars. If we are to do that today, we badly need to revive the culture of diplomacy and dialogue and the quest for a balance of our interests, rather than making rash, instinctive decisions in our desire to punish those who disobey us. What this is really about is preserving humankind in all its richness and diversity. Russia has always been, and always will be, open to working together with all those who show that they are ready to meet halfway and cooperate on a basis of equality and mutual respect. We will continue to uphold those principles in the work of the United Nations in the interests of improving global governance and genuinely democratizing international relations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The theme of the General Assembly at this year's session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", is highly relevant, especially for an Organization that has made an exceptional contribution to peace and development. The United Nations has upheld its mission to support world peace by setting up a collective security mechanism, defusing regional hotspots and deploying peacekeepers. It has been instrumental in preventing full-scale wars and securing more than seven decades of relative peace for humankind. It has pursued its goals for development by setting a global development agenda and mobilizing resources worldwide. The United Nations has helped many developing countries onto a fast track to development, leading billions of people to modernization.

But since the ideals of the United Nations have not yet been fully realized, countries must persist in their efforts. We live in an era defined by deepening trends towards a multipolar world, the collective emergence of emerging markets and developing countries, steady progress in globalization and the application of information technology, and an exciting new phase in the scientific and technological revolution. In humankind's pursuit of greater development and prosperity, we see opportunities as never before. We are also living in a world that is witnessing profound changes in the international landscape and the balance of power. We see major threats, traditional and non-traditional, inadequate drivers of global growth and an increasing backlash against globalization. In our pursuit of lasting peace and sustainable development we are encountering unprecedented challenges. We are once again at a crossroads, so it is time to make the right choices between peace and war, openness and isolation, unity and division.

Two years ago, from this rostrum, Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, called on us to foster a new form of international relations, based on win-win cooperation, with a view to building community and a shared future for humankind (see A/70/PV.13). President Xi's vision is a great one, reflecting his firm grasp of the prevailing trends of our times. It is also China's answer to the question of the kind of future that humankind should build, and it is fully aligned with the purposes of the United Nations and the aspirations of its Member States. With the understanding and support of the international community, it can inspire us as a common goal.

To ensure peace, development and dignity for all, we must embrace the spirit of the United Nations and move its work forward. The United Nations must continue to be the guardian of world peace, since the maintenance of peace and security is one of the core purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and

the primary mission of the Organization. The United Nations must encourage its members to live together in peace, as good neighbours, and to work to achieve shared, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. The five permanent members of the Security Council must play an exemplary role in rejecting conflict and confrontation in favour of mutual respect and win-win cooperation. All Member States should treat one another as equals, choosing dialogue over confrontation and partnerships over alliances in their relations. Credibility and justice must be upheld and efforts must be made to find common ground, manage differences and work to settle disputes peacefully and reasonably.

We need a holistic approach to fighting terrorism. We must abide by the rule of law and avoid applying double standards. Terrorism should not be associated with any particular ethnic group or religion, and the United Nations should lead and coordinate efforts to build a global united front against it. Political solutions are the fundamental answer to hotspot issues. The parties to any conflict must stay committed to dialogue and negotiation, and the international community should work objectively and impartially to facilitate dialogue and promote peace, rather than stirring up trouble and making things more difficult. The United Nations should serve as the main channel for conflict prevention, make full use of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations and step up political mediation efforts.

We are seeing some light on the horizon for a political settlement of the Syrian crisis. We should make good use of the Geneva and Astana channels and exert greater pressure for direct substantive talks between the Syrian Government and opposition. Alongside the talks, efforts must be made to achieve a cessation of hostilities, increase humanitarian assistance and launch post-war reconstruction in order to give people greater faith in peace talks.

The Palestinian question has been bogged down on the United Nations agenda for 70 years, and the international community owes the Palestinians a long-overdue and just solution. All settlement activities in the occupied territories and all violence against civilians must end immediately. Concerted efforts should be made to advance a political resolution based on a two-State solution and to restart the peace talks as soon as possible. We must think out of the box with a view to facilitating peace through development and helping the people of the region to lay the groundwork for peace.

The situation on the Korean peninsula is now a focus of international attention. Two days ago, on 19 September, we marked the twelfth anniversary of the 2005 joint statement of the Six-Party Talks. At the time, the six parties — China, as Chair, the United States, Russia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan — made concerted efforts, and the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the two major parties involved, made political decisions. We formulated a road map for the denuclearization of the peninsula. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea undertook to abandon its nuclear programmes, and the United States to normalize its relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. All the parties committed to setting up a permanent peace mechanism for the peninsula. The joint statement opened new vistas for regional peace and stability and inspired hope for a peaceful settlement to the dispute.

Twelve years have passed. Some may think that the situation on the peninsula has changed and that the joint statement has become outdated, but we believe that things that follow progressive trends of the times are never outdated, and that decisions on the right side of history never become obsolete. If there has been any change, and if there is anything we need now, it is still denuclearization, but denuclearization that is more comprehensive, thorough and irreversible. There should be no new nuclear-weapon State, whether in the north or south of the peninsula, in North-East Asia or anywhere else in the world. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea not to continue along this dangerous path. We call on the United States to honour its formal commitment and on all the parties to play a constructive role in easing tensions. There is still hope for peace, and we must not give up. Negotiation is the only way out and deserves every effort. The parties should meet halfway by addressing one another's legitimate concerns. In China's view, the day when the denuclearization of the peninsula is achieved should also be the day when a peace mechanism is established. China has always been a force for peace. We have worked tirelessly for a peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue on the peninsula. Whatever changes happen, however long it takes and whatever the difficulties we may face, China will stay firmly committed to

the denuclearization of the peninsula, to dialogue and negotiations and to regional peace and stability.

The United Nations must remain a champion of international development. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be its top priority in the field of development. It is important to encourage Member States to seek complementarity between the Agenda and their own development strategies, to eliminate hunger and poverty and to leave no one behind. We must ensure equitable, inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. We should enhance the role of North-South cooperation as the main channel for international development and cooperation, while leveraging South-South and tripartite cooperation. Climate change is a major factor to consider where the sustainable development of humankind is concerned. It will be crucial to ensure that the United Nations continues to work on the follow-up to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and to urge all parties to uphold the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, equitability, and respective capabilities, and to reinforce international cooperation on climate issues.

The problem of refugees is a result of regional instability and uneven development. The United Nations must respond to crises promptly through its humanitarian efforts. We must work to address the root causes of such problems by helping countries and regions to achieve development. Restoring the global economy to full recovery and growth continues to be an uphill task. The United Nations should promote the facilitation of liberalized trade and investment and work to build an open world economy. We must seize the opportunities that the newest phase of the scientific revolution presents, stay committed to reform, pursue innovation-driven development, find new spaces for development and foster a new development system.

The United Nations must continue to be a pacesetter on global governance. As an organization at the core of the contemporary international system, it can accurately reflect the state of affairs in global governance. It should therefore follow current trends and work to make international relations more democratic, rules-based and equitable. Our Organization belongs to all of its 193 Member States, which are all equal, regardless of their size and wealth. The United Nations should therefore promote a spirit of democracy and ensure that all countries enjoy equal rights and opportunities and follow the same rules in international affairs, enabling them to set international rules together, run global affairs together and share in development achievements together. At the same time, the United Nations should also constantly improve its institutions and mechanisms in order to uphold the interests of the majority of countries and to keep abreast of the evolving international landscape. It should promote the equal and uniform application of international law and stress the importance of fully and faithfully implementing it. It should urge all parties to observe the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, fulfil their responsibilities and obligations and keep the foundations of international law and order intact.

Globalization is an unstoppable trend. It is not a choice between East and West. It should not follow the law of the jungle, much less a winner-take-all approach. The United Nations should uphold the principle of extensive consultations, joint contributions and shared benefits, and work to make economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all.

The United Nations must remain a facilitator of exchanges among civilizations. It is the diversity of its civilizations that gives our global village its vitality. We should raise awareness about the importance of that diversity and be eager to respect, protect and promote it. Civilizations can complement one another as they seek common ground and make progress together through exchanges and mutual learning. We should encourage our various civilizations, cultures and countries to flourish together through interaction and healthy competition. UNESCO and the Alliance of Civilizations have a large role to play in that regard. We should also encourage and respect the efforts of countries to choose development paths that suit their national conditions. Countries with different systems and paths should respect and learn from one another in order to make progress together. The United Nations should serve as a platform for harmonious coexistence between countries with different systems and as a bridge for dialogue and exchange.

China's journey over the past five years has been a momentous one. Under the leadership of the eighteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, China has made remarkable achievements on all fronts, and socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new and historic stage. As we looking to the future, China's continuous progress will bring to the world greater benefits of peace, development and governance. China

is an anchor of world peace. Maintaining the stability of a country with a population of more than 1.3 billion people represents an enormous contribution to world peace. Aggression has never been in Chinese genes, and acts of colonization or plunder are nowhere to found in our history. President Xi has solemnly pledged that no matter how advanced China's development becomes, it will never seek hegemony or to expand or extend its sphere of influence. China will always vote for peace in the Security Council.

China is an engine for development and prosperity. The Belt and Road Forum for international cooperation that China successfully hosted last May has produced more than 270 cooperation deliverables. China wants to make the Belt and Road a road to peace, prosperity, openness and innovation that connects different civilizations. This project of the century will offer a new paradigm for efforts to promote world peace and development. It will also inject fresh impetus into the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Starting next year, China will host the China International Import Expo, make even greater strides in its opening up and provide a new driving force for the global economy.

China is a champion of multilateralism. It firmly upholds the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of countries; and the centrality of the United Nations in international affairs. No matter how the international landscape may change, China will stay firmly committed to multilateralism and will shoulder the responsibilities assigned it by the United Nations and will fulfil its due obligations to the world.

The Communist Party of China will soon convene its nineteenth national congress. This will be a very important meeting held at a time when China is reaching a decisive stage in the completion of the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and a key phase in the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It will open a new chapter in the pursuit of the Chinese dream. China will seek to realize its own dream in the context of the shared aspirations of all peoples of the world and continue to contribute to the development of all other countries through its own progress. Let us work together for a better future for humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luis Videgaray Caso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Videgaray Caso (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am addressing the General Assembly today at a difficult and painful time for Mexicans. Our nation has been battered by Nature. In recent weeks, together with our sister nations of the Caribbean and the states of Florida and Texas, in the United States, we have been hit by tremendous natural disasters that have resulted in suffering, destruction and death.

The worst for Mexico was two consecutive earthquakes in only 12 days, which have put to the test not only our readiness and infrastructure but our very humanity. The first earthquake left approximately 100 people dead and 300,000 injured in the southern states of Chiapas and Oaxaca. The second, just 48 hours ago, so far has caused 273 deaths and the destruction of many houses, schools and bridges. It has left many people wounded in Mexico City and in the central part of Mexico.

In the face of these natural disasters, today more than ever I feel proud to be Mexican. Mexican society, united and in a spirit of solidarity, has taken to the streets to help and rescue the victims. We are seeing young people rescuing the old, children rescuing their parents, homemakers joining rescue brigades, neighbours collecting food, people opening their homes and turning them into shelters, and others forming human chains to clear debris and save the lives of those who are still trapped. It is with great hope that we inform the Assembly that we have been able to pull 51 people alive from collapsed buildings, and we hope to rescue many more.

At this difficult time, Mexicans are very moved by the many speedy gestures of solidarity on the part of the international community. Friends are there at difficult times, and we have seen with great emotion that Mexico has true friends throughout the world. Their timely help can make the difference between life and death for many. So far, priority has been given to rescue activities, helping people trapped in the rubble to be able to see the light of day once again. We are also providing immediate medical assistance to those who need it urgently, and have joined together to feed and shelter all those who have lost their homes or are afraid to return to them.

Leading these efforts is a society resolved to move forward stronger than ever. We have had vital help in assisting our people from our armed forces and civil protection authorities. The rescuers have not rested in this task, and yet much remains to be done.

On behalf of the people and the Government of Mexico, and on behalf of the President of all Mexicans, Enrique Peña Nieto, let me wholeheartedly express my gratitude for the innumerable shows of sympathy and support that we have received from throughout the world. This help shows us that to be in the United Nations following a natural disaster means being among one's family. Today Mexico feels embraced and is relieved to see that the world has not abandoned us in our tragedy. We would in particular like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and the staff of the United Nations system that help with emergency situations by supporting urgent assistance efforts.

I should like also to thank the many countries that mobilized very quickly to send rescue teams and experts. This morning in Mexico City we woke up to the presence of rescue teams from Honduras and El Salvador, who were assigned to the Tlalpan area. Rescue teams from Israel were busy in Álvaro Obregón street; from the United States, in Escocia and Edimburgo streets; and from Panama, in Queretaro and Medellin streets. Rescue teams have recently arrived from Spain, and in the next few hours we are expecting teams from Ecuador, Japan, Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru and many other nations that have offered help, which we will definitely accept and avail ourselves of.

We give heartfelt thanks to the Governments of those countries for their solidarity. The Mexican people will not forget it.

The international solidarity that is on display in Mexico does not mean that we should not talk about the challenges facing the world, which can be overcome successfully only through that same solidarity. One of those challenges is the growing lack of confidence in multilateralism. In the past decade, the international economy experienced the impacts of a severe financial crisis in the more developed countries, which led to a sudden rise in unemployment, the loss of savings and a drop in the net worth of millions of families; many companies also went bankrupt. In addition, thousands of jobs are gradually disappearing owing to the growing use of robotics in certain industries and the automatization in the service industry. These factors have given rise to a wave of deep fear and social frustration, which have led to the rejection of an open world and of globalization.

Terrorism has also contributed to increasing fears of the outside world among the peoples of various regions. This wave of fear and rejection of globalization has reached the United Nations and other international organizations. Today we hear voices questioning the effectiveness of multilateralism in dealing with global challenges. It would seem today that the community of sovereign States is dealing with a false dilemma: to persevere in cooperation and in building bridges of understanding or, on the contrary, to close borders and build walls based on fear. Mexico rejects that dilemma. Mexico has been, is and will remain a sovereign State with a deep multilateral vocation. No country, however powerful, is capable of responding on its own to the enormous shared challenges of our time.

It is multilateralism that makes the difference between an international system of States that are limited to mutual coexistence and an international society in which sovereign States are committed to a joint and responsible coexistence for the solution of the common challenges. The commitment of States to multilateralism reduces anarchic tendencies in the international system. A world based on sovereignly accepted rules and procedures is in everyone's interest, because multilateralism sets acceptable international parameters within which sovereign States accept to maintain their conduct.

The achievements of multilateralism in recent years are many. The fight against climate change, the preservation of biodiversity, the regulation of the arms trade, the new paradigm of international drug control policy and the response to natural disasters are some examples of that. Today, Mexico is betting once again on multilateralism in the process of negotiating the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Today, as Mexico confronts a tragedy, Mexicans once again see the value of multilateralism through the support provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We recognize the value of being part of an authentic international community. In minutes, OCHA helped us to identify the countries that had the capacities to support our emergency. In that moment of pain, multilateralism and the United Nations showed the Mexicans their most generous and practical face.

Few instruments call for solidarity among human beings with the power of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For Mexico, the Agenda is a State commitment. In that regard, we established a national council, headed by the President of the Republic, and the Federal Government will prepare its budget and development plans based on the criteria contained in the Agenda. The 2030 Agenda should serve as a new focal point for the work of our Organization. We must channel the energies of the United Nations towards effectively seeking the prosperity of the people of the planet.

Mexico will always be in favour of peace and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Unfortunately, armed conflicts continue to demand the involvement of the United Nations. That is why Mexico has participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 2014. The successful case of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is a significant example. However, if the United Nations is to be more effective in that task, it is necessary to strengthen its preventive capacities, focused on the individual, the promotion of development and, of course, respect for human rights.

The existence of nuclear weapons poses a threat to all humankind. In view of the persistence of the nuclear danger, the Government of Mexico signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons yesterday, which the executive will soon submit to the approval of the Senate of the Republic. At the same time, Mexico will support all Security Council resolutions against nuclear threats, and today we reiterate our full support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in order to ensure its effective compliance.

We unequivocally condemn all terrorist attacks, regardless of their motivation. That is why we support the multilateral initiatives of the United Nations, which, together with the efforts to eradicate terrorism, promote tolerance and the respect for human rights. States have the obligation to protect and promote human rights. However, women and girls suffer sexual violence, exclusion, marginalization, discrimination and, in extreme cases, abominable murders. Mexico recognizes its obligation to redouble efforts to combat those practices and punish their perpetrators. States should be committed in solidarity to the empowerment of women and girls. Gender equality is a prerequisite for a world in which peace and development are truly sustainable, inclusive and lasting.

Mexico reaffirms its openness to the world. We are expanding and diversifying our political, economic and cooperative links with all regions, including Europe, Asia and the Pacific. Mexico and the Union Europe are about to complete the updating of their legal framework, which will have stronger instruments, based on shared values, such as the defence of multilateralism, to better face the global challenges of today together. In the same way, we are strengthening our ties with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. We have launched trade negotiations with Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Israel, to mention just a few.

At the same time, we are determined to deepen our ties with the region to which we proudly belong, Latin America and the Caribbean. The natural disaster that Mexico experienced proves that solidarity is a critical value for the countries of our region. Mexico is standing and will continue to stand in solidarity with each and every one of the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. We want to stand in solidarity with our brothers from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in their ongoing efforts to strengthen the security, stability and prosperity of their societies in the interest of increasing the safety and prosperity of their peoples. Mexico also wishes to stand in solidarity with our brothers of the Caribbean, who are facing a huge challenge in their reconstruction. Mexico has been and will continue to be present in that effort.

We want to stand in solidarity with the Venezuelan people, who are struggling to recover their democracy. We will maintain our solidarity with our partners of the Pacific Ocean Alliance — Chile, Colombia and Peru — in order to continue promoting innovation, trade and investment in our countries. We want to stand in solidarity with members of the Southern Common Market — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — with which the Pacific Ocean Alliance has started a promising process of rapprochement. We want to be in solidarity with our Cuban brothers, who aspire to open up to the world and normalize their relations with all nations. Mexico is also a proud member of North America. As a sovereign and solidary nation, we believe in the process of North American integration so that the region can consolidate itself as the most competitive in the world. Mexico aspires to and foresees a region where bridges of friendship and cooperation prevail, along with the principle of shared responsibility in facing our common problems. Today, the people and the Government of Mexico

reiterate from this rostrum their deep solidarity with all Mexicans living in the United States, regardless of their immigration status. The Government of Mexico has the moral and legal obligation to protect and support them. Through our consulates, we will continue to support them, defend their rights and advocate for their causes. We are deeply proud of them and their contribution to the North American economy, culture and society. We are particularly proud of the "dreamers" and will continue to strive for a permanent solution to their legal status.

With Canada and the United States, we are making progress in updating the North American Free Trade Agreement. We are participating in that process with absolute seriousness. Mexico will always defend its legitimate national interests in the conviction that it is possible to achieve a very positive result for all three countries. We know that the world is focused on the outcome of those negotiations. We have an opportunity to consolidate a more prosperous, more competitive and more just North America.

In the present moment of pain, Mexicans see the value of a more supportive, efficient, effective, transparent and representative United Nations. The Government that I represent supports the proposals of Secretary-General António Guterres, because they are aimed at making the United Nations system a more effective and solidary Organization.

The message that I bring today is that Mexico will overcome the recent catastrophe and our nation will be stronger for it. Mexicans are a strong people. The people and the Government of Mexico are still standing. Today, Mexicans thank the world and the United Nations. We thank the United Nations agencies for being aware of us. We thank Governments for their sympathy, support and extraordinarily valuable help. We thank all for their solidarity. We thank the citizens of the world who are thinking of us today. We thank them for their prayers and good wishes and for standing with Mexicans, today and always.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.